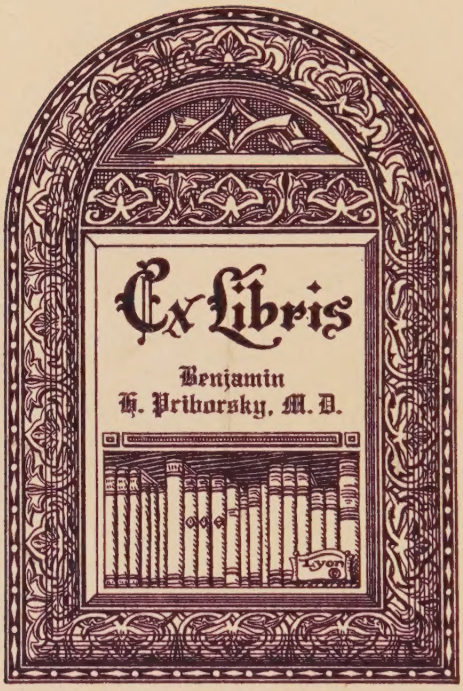
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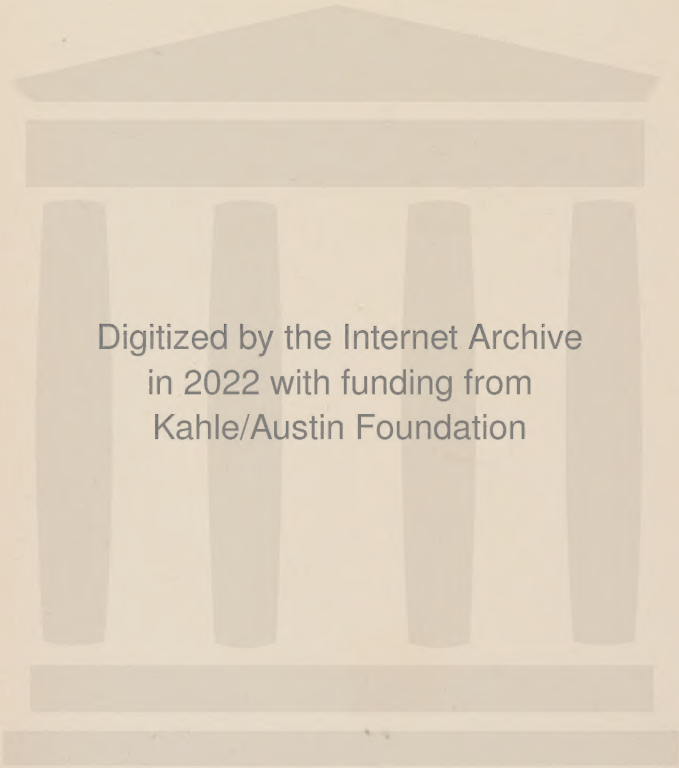
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# MESSAGES

by

RAMON FERNANDEZ

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY
MONTGOMERY BELGION

New York
HARCOURT, BRACE AND COMPANY

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RAHWAY, N. J.

THE ORIGINAL BEARS THIS DEDICATION:

TO MY MOTHER

THE TRANSLATION, IT IS FELT, SHOULD BE INSCRIBED:

TO RAMON FERNANDEZ

## A PREFACE BY THE TRANSLATOR

THESE are Messages for those who feel passionately that one cannot merely exist: something has to be made out of living. Mr. Fernandez is concerned with the fascinating but elusive problem of personality. As an ideal in life, he points to the development and perfection of character.

'There is no being but becoming.' The phrase is familiar enough, but what does it mean? Its sound is so agreeable that usually the sound contents us, but for the author of this book that will not do. He compels us to inquire for the meaning. Obviously being must be an ideal state towards which we gradually draw, or should draw, nearer. For him this implies that to begin with, at the start, no one of us has a personality. Yet, it will be retorted, we are all thoroughly well aware that we are. Agreed, says Mr. Fernandez; but this awareness is merely an internal tendency in each of us impelling us towards the achievement of being, the attainment of the ideal.

Does this tendency take care of itself? Can

we passively let ourselves grow? It has been thought so; Oscar Wilde, for instance, professed to believe we could. But if there is one respect in which the present generation differs from Wilde's, it is in this: the men of Wilde's day drew a bittersweet satisfaction out of concluding in nothingness, out of accepting negation, out of being passive; we, on the contrary, feel that we must obtain salvation, and that we can do so only through action. To quote words pronounced by Mr. T. S. Eliot in connection with these very Messages, we are a 'generation which is beginning to turn its attention to an athleticism, a training, of the soul as severe and ascetic as the training of the body of a runner.'

Thus we are in a condition to listen to Mr. Fernandez when he contends that each of us has individually to create his future, and, moreover, that there is nothing inevitable about it; each of us has to create his future—if he can. Hence we shall do it better if we strive to do it consciously than if we leave it, as our forbears occasionally were able to leave it, to instinct.

How then can the individual consciously set about achieving such a creation? The answer is adumbrated in the following pages; no more than

adumbrated because Mr. Fernandez has felt modestly that to begin with his ideas should have illustrious defenders; in this book, therefore, he has merely sought to show that his ideas have been the instinctive guides of certain great writers, and that for the lack of them certain other great writers were, in truth, failures.

But how, it will be asked, is he able to show this? Through what he calls philosophic criticism. This is Mr. Fernandez's first book and he is in his thirties. That means in his case that he begins writing only after a long and thorough preparation; he has devoted himself especially to post-graduate studies in philosophy. Thus equipped, he has been able to seek out in the works of those writers he considers the philosophic substructure. That alone is enough to entitle him to the name of pioneer, since almost the only previous philosophic critic of literature was Coleridge, and what he did differs from what Mr. Fernandez attempts.

One further query remains to be settled. How can the consideration of creative literature assist us to live? Mr. Fernandez replies that to create imaginatively and to act in life are practically identical operations, and in support of this he produces

strong evidence. But if this is so, it follows that his book may be studied fruitfully, not only by those eager to affirm themselves in life, but also by those who are writing, or trying to write, novels, as well as by all those who read novels for more than pastime.

What Mr. Fernandez calls for, in short, is a new individualism, a new stoicism, an attitude to life maintained at a tension without relaxation and carried along in a progress without rest. And since it has long been the proud boast of Englishmen and Americans that they were individualists, they in particular should be ready to lend an attentive ear to such an ethic. It is on that account that I have translated *Messages*.

M. B.

Je ne vois clair qu'au contact de la vie.
JACQUES RIVIÈRE.[1]
[I see clearly only in contact with life.]

HAD it not been for the affectionate solicitude of Jacques Rivière, these essays would perhaps never have seen the light. An indefatigable trainer of minds, he butted me out of the realm of reverie without allowing me time to see what was happening. He was one of those whom one fol-

[1] *Biographical Note*—It may be worth while to say a few words about Jacques Rivière (1886-1925), for although known probably only to those interested in contemporary French literature, his influence has been far in excess of the relatively small body of work he left behind. Apart from a series of essays, this consists indeed merely of one novel, *Aimée*, which affords a fresh insight into the relations between two persons of opposite sex, and of *L'Allemand*, the psychological study of a race. Both these were written while he was a prisoner of war in Switzerland. Had he lived, he would, of course, have produced far more. He was in the middle of a second novel when in February, 1925, he succumbed to typhoid fever (his health had been undermined by more than four years of captivity, by overwork and financial stress). Even so, Benjamin Crémieux has described him as 'the leading essayist of the day' and Henri Ghéon has said that he was 'a great writer in the making.' Those who would know more of him will find him revealed in the published volumes of his correspondence (with Paul Claudel and with Henri Alain-Fournier, his brother-in-law). As for his influence, this was exercised through the *Nouvelle Revue Française*, founded in 1909 by the writers, André Gide, Marcel Arnaud, Jacques Copeau, Henri Ghéon, André Rutyers, and Jean Schlumberger. Until the outbreak of war, when the review was suspended, Rivière was

lows joyously with one's eyes shut. I open them now, and I see well enough that I have no right to expect from the public an indulgence equalling his; but I beg the reader to consider the pages of this volume as the scattered fragments of an interrupted dialogue. I owe to Rivière's contradictions a good share of the ideas which were leading

its sub-editor. From June, 1919, when publication was resumed, until his death he was editor. Joseph Delteil, the author of *Joan of Arc*, has written that it is thanks to Rivière's *Nouvelle Revue Française* that French literature is not still standing at France, Maurice Barrès, and Jean Richepin, but has at least moved on as far as Claudel, Gide, Proust, and Valéry. Its pages have been open to writers of all shades, young Roman Catholics such as François Mauriac and mature radicals like Georges Duhamel. At the same time as it made Joseph Conrad known in France, it published the first plea for a reconciliation between France and Germany. While thus broad-minded in his literary and political taste, Rivière himself was a Catholic, though not to be classified with the main group of French Neo-Thomist writers. How real a Catholic two happenings in his life showed. When during his twentieth year he found that faith had left him, he was thrown into the gravest distress. He turned for help to the eminent Catholic poet, dramatist, and prose writer, Paul Claudel, now French Ambassador to the United States (to a study of whom he had devoted his first published essay), and through the influence of their correspondence (Claudel was then in the Far East) he regained serenity. Again, after the War, he had a kind of relapse, for though he still said his prayers, he ceased going to Mass. This led to a belief that he had abandoned his religion a second time, and from this belief some controversy has resulted in Paris since his death. His widow and close friends testify, however, that at the last when they were gathered round his death-bed, although a day or so before he had lamented being suddenly despoiled of his life, '*my life*,' he insisted, he called out these final words: 'There, the gates are open. I am going to meet the light divine. I am miraculously saved!'—*The Translator.*

in me, before I knew it, the confused life of instincts. May this hasty adieu bear to his memory the tribute of an eternal and pious gratitude.

R. F.

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# I

# OF PHILOSOPHIC CRITICISM

# I

# OF PHILOSOPHIC CRITICISM[1]

## I

ALBERT THIBAUDET[2] used to distinguish three kinds of criticism: academic criticism, the criticism of artists, and spoken criticism, that of the *salons* and of professional circles, a sort of literary stock exchange. Above, below, or beside these three criticisms, is there not room for a fourth, which, examining with a more frankly philosophic method the problems dealt with by the three others, would not be content with study-

[1] The greater portion of this essay appeared in *The Dial* for March, 1927.

[2] Mr. Thibaudet is professor of the History of Literature in the University of Geneva and each month contributes a critical essay, somewhat in the manner of Montaigne, to the *Nouvelle Revue Française* in Paris. In these essays he reconciles an impulse towards freedom and spontaneity with a desire for order and precision. His first book was a study of Mallarmé, his most recent a study of Paul Valéry. Outside literature proper he has been most strongly influenced by Bergson and next by Charles Maurras, the royalist leader and apostle of 'the intelligence.' He has devoted valuable books to each.—*Translator's Note.*

ing works for themselves, in their historical or technical significance, but would seek to pick up and follow the spiritual dynamism which they reveal and then to situate them in the human universe? Of course anything is possible in this order, in which it is enough to demand that a thing should be for it to come at once into being; but I should like to establish here precisely what I seek to show by example later in this volume, that is, that a philosophic criticism may be as useful to the development of philosophy as to the development of literature and art.

In considering things distantly and superficially, it appears natural to wish to apply to the analysis of works of art methods which have been so brilliantly successful in the domain of science; and one must indeed be surprised that the timeliness of such a measure should not already have been felt.[3] Philosophy today no longer consists of an independent discipline *in so far as its content is concerned*. It is a form of which the material has

[3] An attempt to apply such methods has in fact already been made in *Principles of Literary Criticism*, by I. A. Richards (New York: Harcourt, Brace; London: Kegan Paul). See also the essay: Psycho-analysis and Criticism, in Herbert Read's *Reason and Romanticism* (London: Faber and Gwyer).—*Translator's Note.*

already been elaborated a first time, if you will a form at one remove. It can no longer overtake the mind which it pursues unless it watches for it at a moment when by a peculiar activity it is revealed to itself. The old metaphysics caught up man's works with her long, star-spangled mantle; modern philosophy is like a sort of transparent gauze, subtle, shapeless, revealing itself as it reveals and modelling itself as it models the spontaneous products of the human mind. That it should so far have been limited almost exclusively to reflex analysis of the productions of the laboratory means simply that the typical vicissitudes of the mind are discovered through science and also that philosophers are ordinarily not very familiar with artistic creation or contemplation.

More than that. Art and literature are operative in the world of quality. The more things are qualified, diverse, irreducible to one another, the more the artist feels at ease and breathes freely. Now the aim of science is known to be to establish measurable relations between these same things. In science to understand is to measure, that is to say to eliminate objects in order to consider only the relations of size which are incorporated in know-

ledge. To draw imaginative conclusions from a scientific theory is to do something anti-scientific, for it is to project into an immovable absolute what is essentially movable and relative. Art likes to put us in contact with images of objects expressed in themselves and for themselves: what interests science is not at all contact, it is the to and fro of the mind to the object and of the object to the mind.

I know well that the relations between objects play an eminent part in the work of art; but two remarks will suffice, I think, to reveal the abyss which separates the latter from the scientific work. The work of art forms an isolated whole which is sufficient to itself and *stands up alone,* so to speak, in the spiritual universe. This assumes the pre-existence and the pre-eminence of the whole in relation to the parts, and therefore that the relations of the parts to the whole are determined by consideration of the latter. What is this saying but that that whole is an *absolute position,* like the God of the scholastics or the being of the post-Kantians? Thus, while scientific relations are anterior to a total conception of the universe, which, by the way, remains a purely hypothetical limit, artistic rela-

tions are posterior to the unity of the whole, being composed according to finalist exigencies of convention or combination. Allowing that the visions of art are by definition imaginative, we can say that *aesthetics must be an imaginative ontology, that is to say that the fundamental problem of aesthetics is no other than the metaphysical problem of being, but transposed to the plane of the imagination.*

If now we consider the psychological springs of the work, the relations of expression to the expressed, we meet with the same difference. 'The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art,' writes T. S. Eliot, 'is by finding an "objective correlative"; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that *particular* emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked.' This is a way of proceeding the reverse of that of science: the latter, which, in so far as it has found it possible, has dissolved the object into an 'algebraic dust,' to employ Mr. Bergson's expression, seeks to represent emotion by movements which may make it intelligible, and

*solely intelligible,* I mean utilizable through an act of the intelligence. The affective shade of emotion is not communicated by these movements any more than by their objective causes. Art on the contrary, in order to create a suitable objective correlative, evokes almost exclusively the purely qualitative states of objects as they are given in an immediate sensible and affective experience. For that is a mediocre art which demands from us an effort of *reflection* in order that we may be in a position to apprehend its images.

Scientific work offers to the philosopher a plan of studies and a sort of rational ready-reckoner, vast, complex and satisfying. As philosophy no longer dares to adventure alone in search of truth, it is natural that philosophers should study the disciplines providing incontestable guarantees. As Mr. Brunschvicg [4] has well said: 'The philosopher is not a man who calculates or experiments; and yet you would have such a man, in the solitary colloquy of his brain with his sheet of paper, forestall those solutions which the progress of mathematics and experimentation, notwithstanding how rapid and

[4] Mr. Léon Brunschvicg (b. 1869) is the author of *La Causalité, Les Étapes de la Philosophie mathématique,* and a study of Spinoza. His is the standard edition of Pascal's *Pensées.—Translator's Note.*

disconcerting they are, has not yet been able to supply!' That no doubt could not be better said, but it would be dangerous to allow these words to express the philosopher's entire thought. Through so much considering of quality, Mr. Meyerson's irrational,[5] as a strange body which must be acknowledged but which remains external to thought, one runs the risk of diminishing that thought itself when perhaps it is not reducible to its philosophico-scientific expression. In enlisting as the servant of science, philosophy is in danger of becoming the slave of a mode of thinking which perhaps represents only a part of the mind's tendencies or, if you prefer, only one of its directions. Here is a square whence several roads extend: one cannot declare *a priori* that they all end in the same

[5] Mr. Emile Meyerson (b. 1858) is considered to be the foremost epistemologist of France (for though born in Russian Poland he has lived in Paris for forty-six years). He is the author of *Identité et Réalité* (1908), *De l'Explication dans les Sciences*, and *La Déduction relativiste*. He thus describes his *irrationals*: 'At all times, whether as Hellenic atomism, as the peripatetic science of the Middle Ages, as Newtonian physics, or as Einstein's physics, science essentially supposes the existence of *things;* it implies an ontology, and, further, far from being content with *laws*, it seeks at every moment for *explanation*, it tends to know *causes*. In this constant exercise of the "causal tendency," the action of reason is limited only by the resistance of nature, which is displayed in the form of *irrationals*.' His next book will be entitled: *Du Progrès de la Pensée.—Translator's Note.*

place without shocking our most thoroughly justified habits: yet that is what philosophers do when, taking the scientific road, they assert that thus they will attain more surely and no doubt more rapidly to truth. But what of all the other roads? Who knows what surprises these roads would have had in store for them, what divergencies would have been revealed to them, if they had gone along them for their full length? The philosopher's real place of residence is at the crossroads, whence he must adventure in *all* the directions he sees available.

This is, for example, a hypothesis at least worth considering and one that cannot be verified by rationalist philosophy alone: the hypothesis of a dualism of the mind's activity, according to which, to all that constitutes the beyond of scientific knowledge, the thing properly so called, the irrational, irreducible to reason, there would correspond an *intention* of the mind, a mental activity *sui generis,* analogous yet opposed to the rational activity whereby we are led to the discoveries of science. How worth while is such a hypothesis, if it can be consolidated by precise analysis, is obvious: it would tend to do nothing less than enlarge indefinitely the field of mental activity by integrat-

ing with it that part of reality which so far has seemed to escape its jurisdiction. The irrational, an opaque body which science carries along with it and which clouds its course, then appears susceptible to a certain transparence of the mind, and the affinities observed between certain of the latter's tendencies and what one might call the reverse side of rational knowledge, would then make it possible to transport into the interior of the consciousness the dualism, or rather the old, desperate duel, of subject and object.

Now, art alone can furnish for such a research a sum of experiences equal in objective value to that offered by science to rational analysis. In our opinion, the mistake of those who for a century have been striving to make philosophical analysis more supple, to subtract it from the absolute, though often disguised, sovereignty of science, consists in presenting their efforts as attempts at conquest, the success of which would mark a victory over reason. If one rids oneself of all apologetic anxiety, one sees indeed that here is no question of a battle. The progress of aesthetic analysis will not hinder that of rational analysis in the least, for they do not develop on the same line. The radical defect of a religious

philosophy in so far as it would oppose to rationalism a coherent spiritual discipline is the impossibility for it to be given an independent and stable object. The reality which it is thereby claimed to apprehend vacillates and is reabsorbed incessantly in the ideas postulating it. The object, like the shadow of a body at the different hours of the day, at one time extends in front of the subject, at another vanishes within it. The proof of this is that it is always easy to translate the principles of such a philosophy into a subjective language, to transform a metaphysic of the religious object into a psychology of the believing subject. A similar operation applied to the things of art would be as ridiculous as it would be vain. The artistic object resists all attempts of assimilation to the fancies of the subject. It is an independent complex of which the organic unity and cohesion result from a synthesis ensuring to it a life of its own. The aesthetic image is irreducible to the psychological image, just as scientific representation is irreducible to the images of common sense. The work of art therefore offers a solid basis, an authentic piece of data, to analytic investigations. In it the mind seizes itself as having accomplished itself in an object.

## II

As it would not be timely to draw here the consequences of the preceding remarks, we shall put aside the problem of aesthetics to say a word about the method adopted in this book. I think I have sufficiently indicated the reasons which we have for coming before the works of literature in a spirit rather different from that of routine criticism. The latter is essentially descriptive; it sees and tells of what it has seen, it associates the work to a series of more or less similar works, composing abstract figures and historical scenery: very rarely does it study the philosophic substructure of the work it is considering. What should be understood exactly by philosophic substructure? Something very simple and altogether essential. Take the example of Balzac, since one of this book's chapters is devoted to him. Opinions on Balzac must vary infinitely so long as consideration of him is confined to a purely literary point of view. One will exalt his genius while another will vilify his style; a third will call him the poet of money, the bard of worldly success, while a fourth will not see any distinction between him and his sensational-story

colleagues, and a fifth will respectfully adopt the academic opinion, admiring and unjust simultaneously. Really all these judgments are far from exhausting the intelligence of the Balzacian work, and in any case they do not explain it. Like every descriptive operation, they leave thought in a painful disorder without giving to it the means of regrouping reading impressions, of constructing them according to satisfactory intellectual indications. Our judgment is given a seating by historical analogies without being enlightened by them; as for psychological hypotheses, their grave defect is that they substitute one discipline for another by going round the aesthetic problem proper. I certainly do not pretend to have furnished a definitive interpretation of Balzac's method, but I believe that in the drawing of the distinction between the conceptual plane and the dramatic plane in Balzac, in the remarks on the substitution of a mosaic of facts for the living synthesis of individuals, and in the analysis of the conditions of movement in the novel, there is at least supplied, pending something better, a provisional explanation of Balzacian creation, an explanation seeking to group and render intelligible those traits which strike us on reading the *Comédie*

*Humaine.* The philosophic substructure of a work *is the body of ideas which, organized by a hypothesis, supplies an explanation of the essential characters of that work by relating them to the problems of general philosophy which may be implied by them.*

A philosophic criticism cannot be rigorously positive because it is founded on intuitions which present no other guarantee than their own evidence. As its task consists in translating these intuitions into ideas, it belongs at one and the same time to the aesthetic register—a freely formed and yet necessary intuition—and the philosophic register—an internal cohesion of ideas. To link up the ideal plane with the intuitive plane the philosophic critic disposes of means which cannot be translated into formulae, and we are compelled to rely on his good faith and on the concentration and discipline of his thought. A man of science is allowed to make adventurous hypotheses so long as he has first learned his trade as a man of science; a metaphysician is allowed to pursue his logical dream to the full extent of his most extravagant caprices, but the philosophic critic, precisely because he must base his hypothesis upon an experiment eluding all positive

control, cannot measure or brake his thought too much. He must inspire in us a confidence in two kinds of different though conjugated affirmations, because he must convince us in one and the same mental act of the reality of his relations with things and of the truth of the interpretations of them which he propounds to us.

The part played by experiment in scientific work, by the internal necessities of dialectic in pure philosophy, is played in philosophic criticism by the intuitive plot. It is an indemonstrable postulate that there is in the spiritual universe—in the ideal city erected by the mind, or at least according to its plans—perfectly distinct and perfectly identifiable living unities and that this mind produces beings which become detached from it to lead an unforeknowable and personal life, but if it is an indemonstrable postulate, it is also one essential to any superior form of human life. It must even be added that the superior life begins really only at the threshold of intuition. Whatever dialectical or decorative power an intelligence may dispose of, if it does not collide with resistances which are at first inexplicable, and if it is not guided in its work of adjustment by a sort of *self-prescience* which

notifies it of its successes, it cannot escape from the narrow corridor of an impersonal and verified logic. An intuitive thought can be recognized by the way in which it naturally conjoins an equally extreme freedom and necessity, for the inflexible laws of its own curve can be imposed upon it by itself alone. Preceded by that mysterious accomplice who already possesses, without delivering, the key to the things which it is considering, it is familiar with, before understanding, its object, an object which it recognizes rather than discovers. Its lucidity is, as it were, at one remove. Finally, and this is an infinitely disturbing circumstance, *no description of the object can communicate to us the impression which that thought receives from it,* and which is as the astral body of that object, perceptible by intuition alone. From this result the differences between descriptive thought and intuitive thought. The first tells us of the object as it is revealed by a methodical and normal observation. It makes a tracing of the object and shows it through the description. The second seeks to captivate and cultivate the subtle emanations of the object, but as the latter's external traits give it only indirect help, it turns to images, associations, emo-

tions, ideas, which summon one another into the mind. While descriptive thought tends to concentration on the object, and actually to reduce itself to it, intuitive thought displaces the centre of interest from the object and situates it in consciousness: it remakes the object with psychic material.

Three conditions are required for a philosophic criticism to work well: he who practises it must first have undergone a strong rational preparation so as not to confound genuine intuition with the phantoms of the imagination. There must also be a public, an *élite* capable of understanding, and especially of feeling, what the critic has felt. The world of intuition is a sort of atmosphere of the sensible world exacting from those who would perceive it a special suitability, a refined culture and a perpetual training. And this public is necessary because its approval guarantees both the intuition and the objective. Finally *the objects of intuitive thought must be very sharply delimited and defined in the language of common experience:* this is an essential condition, for the greater the angle between the interpretation of the object and its appearance, the more easily accessible must the latter be, so that each may measure for himself the

relation of one to the other. Through failure to respect this principle, certain modern artists have betrayed splendid talents. Their anxiety to dissimulate or eliminate the object, the erroneous consequence of a legitimate intention, revealed both the excellence of their principles and the inadequacy of their technique. They went round the difficulty instead of solving it; this is always characteristic of the infantile period of a discovery. Having understood or felt that a masterpiece is not in the least the copy of a thing, they forgot that it was that thing's transfiguration, and that it shows itself to be a masterpiece only because it has placed the mind, if one may say so, in possession of the object. If one of the two factors of the relation is suppressed, what becomes of this re-creation of the world by the mind, a re-creation both free and regulated, the source of all artistic joy? A thing once vanished cannot be possessed: it must resist and its resistance must be the measure of our sovereignty. We must not even be left with too much margin: a certain artistic necessity is in the origin of any masterpiece, a necessity made partly by the pressure of the object. A purely formal art recalls those stage swaggerers who perform daring

deeds only when the enemy is not there. It degenerates into the hackneyed even more quickly than academic art, and one cannot see how in any case it can avoid being brought to grief by the decorative. There is in every masterpiece all the absorption and strong silence of spiritual concentration. It must never be forgotten that artistic creation is, in its way, a knowledge.

The relations of expression to the expressed justly provide one of the crucial problems, a *pons asinorum*, of philosophic criticism. For, preoccupied as it is with the essential interests of man and anxious to gather them into a solid sheaf, it cannot be confined to the formal considerations of purely aesthetic criticism. That the work is incommensurable with the author's idiosyncrasy is a fact whereby this criticism cannot be induced to detach the things of art from their human roots. On the contrary the analysis of a technique will appear in this criticism as the graphology, not of an individual character—which would be absurd—but of an ideal will, of an attitude in the face of life, of a spiritual effort. If it seems vain to the philosophic critic to seek to reconstitute the work with psy-

chological elements, he will at least want to gather these together and bring them to the point whence the leap into the void is taken. On the other hand, an attentive study of techniques will reveal to him that art is, as we said above, a way of expressing human experience. He is therefore entitled to erect the theory of aesthetic knowledge and to make us aware of the particular logics of each art. Thanks to the two registers which philosophic criticism possesses, he is able to embrace the problem with a vision both clearer and more complete than is possible for the partisans of pure art and the partisans of representative art, crouching in their entrenchments.

This work of linking-up has never seemed more timely than today when the debate has assumed the form of an irreducible opposition between psychologists and aestheticians. Last year in one symbolical day, a celebrated poet asserted to me while at luncheon that literary psychology was a mere piece of deceptive scenery, and a young analyst insisted at dinner that this same psychology was barely emerging from a long childhood. The first could find no essential difference, so far as the human contribution was concerned, between the

*Comédie Humaine* and Georges Ohnet's *Maître de Forges*. The second thought that Stendhal was very naïf. Do you not feel that for opinions so radically irreconcilable to be gathered in the small space of Paris and the small time of one day indicates only too well that there is something out of gear in our judgment? I will admit that judgment is not essential to the production of works, but after all it is something. Intelligence orders as much as it reveals: its task is not confined to understanding: one also expects it to distribute suitably what it has understood. My poet and my analyst cannot both be right, and if the pleasure of explaining to myself their motives leaves me unsatisfied, then I must make them meet beyond themselves on a plane where their opinions will appear reconcilable, thanks to the right perspective. Supported by Dante, by Racine, and by poor Stendhal, I shall then succeed in convincing myself that the celebrated poet retained from pure tradition only aesthetic composition and discipline, and that if he denied psychology it was perhaps simply because he was not a psychologist, or at least sensitive to the human material which it pleases him to work upon so marvellously. And, on the other hand, thanks

to the same authorities, I shall have to conclude that the young analyst could not yet perceive the abyss separating dramatic analysis from rational analysis: a psychical synthesis is certainly the equal of a correct dissociation in so far as it is intellectual knowledge, and in so far as it is *aesthetic knowledge*, it is very much its superior. Here are two pure derivations originated in happy and precise individual limits. That a creator should not perceive the spiritual regions which he is not called upon to enrich is well; but if he wants to judge, he raises immense problems seemingly insoluble only because the distinction between the individual's instincts and the authentic act of reason has been neglected. In short, the contradictory assertions of poet and analyst assume that a capital and still pending question has been settled: is literary psychology an instrument of discovery, and if so to what extent and under what conditions?

There is another essential point which is related to the previous one and with which philosophic criticism alone is suited to deal: I mean what may be called the two registers of creation. Today, thanks to the confusion of doctrines, to the encroachment of instinct upon judgment, to the ab-

sence of a comprehensive and satisfactory theory, to the faculty now hereditary among our contemporaries of hastily translating more or less their sensations into ideas, and thanks finally to the more and more clearly political organization of literary life, many artists and writers work in two registers at the same time, not without arousing deplorable equivocations. On the one hand, the artist accomplishes his work of artist, on the other he comments upon it, builds up its theory, and relates it to the master works which have aroused the public's or the specialists' attention: he 'talks' the work at the same time as he carries it out. Soon a confusion fatal to common sense has occurred between the work *as it is created* and the work *as it is explained*, that is to say, imagined and willed by the author. The latter extends, completes, and perfects his creation by his conception, he stops holes, dissimulates fissures with ideas, calls to his rescue the masterpieces to which he claims relation; he seeks to make us admire in the work just what he has not succeeded in incorporating therein, and to prevent us from perceiving that his mountain-theory has been delivered of a mouse-work. There is no natural affinity between an artistic reality, the pro-

duct of a creation, and the commentary, however intelligent, which it pleases the author to supply with it. The one cannot serve to measure the other, and certainly the commentary can in no way be substituted for the artistic reality. When words take the place of the thing and the intention, the accomplishment, it is the sign of an attempt to apply to the spiritual life the methods of advertising and politics. The critical consciousness of a work is not the task of its author: such should be, such certainly has been, the principle of all sane criticism. The silence and mystery around a masterpiece infinitely exceed all definition. And besides we know that an idea is valid only if it has not been produced from the same mould as the reality which it interprets.

I have stressed this little defect of our period, a defect which is really a target for satire, only in order to insist once more on the timeliness of a philosophic criticism. All these sandbanks of ideas deposited by modern art threaten to poison us, so that one may ask: is it not time to entrust sanitation and growth to some pioneers of goodwill? That today at every turn, at every moment, and often in spite of ourselves, we raise problems be-

longing to philosophic analysis, is a *fact;* and as nothing is more confusing and disturbing than a beginning of thought, it is by way of being good method to draw completely what we cannot prevent ourselves from sketching.

III

It is not pretended that the essays brought together in this volume accomplish the work of synthesis which we have assigned to philosophic criticism. They only set it going. Written in rather varying circumstances, they rest upon some common ideas which I think it will be useful to draw out and stress here.

Mr. Pierre Morhange, invested with John Brown's armour, has pleasantly reproached me with lacking courage. According to him I am, for the sake of the shadow of a rapid and synthetic essay, letting go the philosophic prey, the reward of a minute, patient and frank analysis. While recognizing that criticism deserves consideration in view of the inadequacies of these beginner's essays, I should like to point out to him nevertheless that the latter respond, at least in intention, to an un-

deniable need of our mind. I may even assure him that I, just like any one else, have my little scheme to offer; but I want precisely to put that scheme aside for the moment and, as it were, *to deserve* it by some careful work of approach and by all the proofs of my good faith which I may be able to provide. I hate easy thought more than anything, and principally that pretentious branch of easy thought that a bad metaphysic is; my intellect is stirred only by the resistances which I can feel are independent of its fancy; and I encounter such resistances only in spontaneous works, only in realities which are not immediately nor totally transparent to the mind. Certain thinkers move among concepts as among things: I admire without envying them. I like to get hold of thought in its rough state, while it is unwilling, all caught and entangled in the organic trammels which while fettering it also reveal its living necessity. If by filtering a naïf work through criticism, I succeed in obtaining a residuum of ideas, I feel I have done more for truth than if I had handled these ideas while ignoring, as it were, those realities which test and guarantee them. For I believe that intelligence must be safe-

guarded from its own laws and that these must be applied with extreme circumspection. It is pleasant to choose an ideological theme as a musician chooses the key of a piece, and draw out of it all that can be drawn: but if you attach yourself to a man, a work, a human adventure, to something, in short, which will not deliver up its secret unless you know how to discover it, I shall be surprised if you do not find yourself endowed with more substantial, more durable, and more effective judgments than the specious variations of your solitude. Is it not one of the surest teachings of the last centuries that the intelligence must be put to the risk of being taken out of itself in order to find veritable accomplishment?

Does this mean that this residuum will consist of 'solutions' properly speaking? Not at all, and that is why I venture to believe that Mr. Morhange's criticism against the form of my essays does not strike home. What I advocate here is a method for *setting* problems, not for *solving* them. These essays—and other similar ones if their principle is accepted—have not and will not have any other function than to submit the material of thought to a first working of selection and tuning.

They may interest those who deem it more delicate to define a problem well rather than to rush after a solution. It is sought in this criticism, static by its method but dynamic in its results, to make thought spurt out of life, and then to ensure constant exchanges between the two. Or, if you like, in other words, the full powers of life are delegated to thought. And I confess that I am too much in love with life not to wait before setting out that life shall have overtaken me, not to go back if necessary a few steps in order to meet it.

I do not intend to dissimulate that in my essays, devoted for the most part to men of letters, I have not had purely literary preoccupations. I set myself roughly the following problem: can the spiritual experience of the nineteenth century,—I mean the spontaneous and organic experience, not the elaborated and systematic experience of the pure philosophers,—supply or suggest some precise intellectual principles which would make human life work better? This is a question which, as will be seen, implies two other complementary ones, first: is it possible and desirable to inflect our existence in a determined direction? And this capital one: should the critical intelligence be restricted to see-

ing that things are and grouping them under laws, or can it have a properly creative influence over these things? For it must clearly be realized that it is one of these two credos that the intellectual must choose and that upon his choice depends the effectiveness of his thought. Why do I say the intellectual? I mean man in his career, in his sentimental relations, the man in the street! All of us need to know whether to understand is only a refined manner of accepting or whether it is to render oneself capable of modifying what one has understood.

My position on this point is very clear although it is bolstered up by an indemonstrable postulate; I hold that in isolating intelligence from reality, in making of it a sort of receiving-post indifferent to what it registers, intelligence and reality are both put out of gear. Let us dissipate forthwith the equivocation of idealist positivism: Mr. Bourget and Mr. Maurras[6] might reply to me on good

[6] Charles Maurras was born in 1868. Mr. Thibaudet has recently pointed out that in France the political men of action have been of the Left now for more than fifty-five years: France has been a republic since 1871. Perhaps because of this, he suggests, the political men of thought, who in the eighteenth century were mostly of the Left too, are nowadays mostly of the Right, in opposition, to borrow a term from English parliamentary tradition. These men of thought, though, are

ground that their intelligence modifies things inasmuch as it tends to substitute the better for the worse; but the question is to know how intelligence sets about obtaining such a result. Now, what it does is to cut up reality into facts and thought into laws, that is to say that it is pretended on principle that it *discovers* what it *conceives*. The result is that thought enjoys no independence in regard to the data of nature—here human and political nature—so that it has to be submitted to that nature's policies, and that finally the principle of its activity is not drawn from itself. The same circular movement is discovered in what one might call roughly the positivism of the Left: intellectual

concerned with politics only in so far as politics are part and parcel of living. Therefore they have had to be provided with a political programme by a specialist from among themselves. This specialist is Charles Maurras. Born in Provence, in the country peopled by the first Greek colonists, he is a Greek by culture. He has a passion for unity, for order. Hence he is the iconoclast of Chateaubriand, Michelet, and Zola. In short, he is the foe of romanticism, the apostle of classicism. His most influential book is entitled *L'Avenir de l'Intelligence* (1905). Theoretically he is worthy of attention, practically he is merely comic. This unity, this order, this reign of the intelligence he so passionately desires, he expects to see brought about through the restoration in France of the monarchy, the putting back of the Orleans family on the throne. But owing to the fact that he is a man of letters, as indeed are his political associates, Léon Daudet and Jacques Bainville, it follows that their newspaper, *L'Action Française*, maintains a literary standard unrivalled or at least unexceeded in journalism. One further point: while most French royalists are Catholics, Maurras is an avowed atheist.—*Translator's Note.*

activity consists then in putting things back in place, in destroying the obstacles which interfere with the advance of nobody knows what mysterious progress.

I think it is easy to break this vicious circle so long as one gets rid of once and for all what I shall call the double sophism of cause and fact. Given, shall we say to simplify matters, a typical action so that it is repeated by a certain number of men, the average causes arbitrarily chosen are established, and we are presented with these causes as determined objects, *given* to the intelligence, and these must be opposed by other causes if one wants to modify their action. These causes and this action itself, thus cut out, isolated, and consolidated, become absolutes directing, not only the behaviour of reason, but also the reactions of instinct. Now, admitting that such a delegation of thought to the object were possible, that object would still have to be actually what it is pretended that it is, that is to say, we should have to be in the presence of the totality of causes and the fact in question would have to express the total reality. But that is a purely abstract limit, never attained, and, be careful to note, *that it is never sought to attain.* To

establish a fact a few anterior and simultaneous events are selected, and their verification determines, *all by itself,* the fact in question. For example, it is claimed that the causes of patriotism are going to be sought; but instead of the whole complexity of the problem being embraced in an impartial spirit of observation, the elements which outline a figure of patriotism in conformity with the idea made of it *a priori* are chosen and called causes. This is the sophism, strongly stressed by Rauh,[7] of the passage from the undetermined to the determined, and that of the substitution of the part for the whole. I may add that these imply a third and far more serious sophism, consisting *in imagining hypocritically what one pretends is being written at the dictation of nature.*

On the two planes of literary creation and spiritual life—between which, as we have said, we shall seek to entertain a regular correspondence—the psychology of cause and fact has no legitimate place. I have sought to show in my essay on Balzac that this sophism is only literally a piece of deceptive scenery, an artifice of method destined to mask

[7] Mr. Fredéric Rauh (b. 1861) is the author of a pioneer work: *De la Méthode dans la Psychologie des Sentiments* (Paris: Alcan, 1899) and of *L'Expérience morale* (1903).—*Translator's Note.*

an impotence to create life immediately. Compensated in the *Comédie Humaine* by an admirable poetic and intellectual genius, this method displays all its defects in the more modest work of Mr. Bourget, especially as in the latter it is utilized, not only to 'set' life, but also, and precisely, to orient it. It is then that its inadequacy is strikingly revealed, the characters in *L'Étape* and *Un Divorce* being only the mechanical models of a healer's too-simplifying imagination. Outside science, the psychology of cause and fact is only a disguise of the imagination, a disguise which fosters the sentimental confusion that it is pretended it dissipates, insidiously passes off the part for the whole, is utilized as an artificial process of creation, and under the appearance of rigorous control gives free rein to the least controlled instincts.

It is from the philosophic and literary failure of the theorizers of fact that I have been led to conclude that it is impossible to act upon life until it has been felt immediately, *and by other means than the intelligence.* For if life remains external to you and you can reach it only through the intelligence, what is going to guarantee for you the exactness of your information and what will guide you in a

choice of orientation? There you are, unless I am mistaken, on the horns of a dilemma, for you will not be able to attain to any beyond of yourself except by using the roundabout of causes and facts, unless you remain parked within the limits of your experience. Now, can a personal experience be held valid if it does not enlighten us about others at the same time as ourselves, not in the manner of a dictionary or inventory, that is to say, abstractly, but by an intuition analogous to that which we have of our own being? At least an artistic work which does not rest on this intuition seems destined to a more or less complete failure; and as for the philosophy of life, that manifests as much repugnance for the solipsism as for the strict methods of science. Not that it underrates the latter, on the contrary; but by definition it is in a hurry, it precedes science as it transcends the isolated ego of the individual, although participating in both in its own way. Its affirmations have an individual character, they spring from the movement, the spiritual impulse of a person, but they must suit others besides that person and interpret the aspects and needs of an extremely complex human reality. Under these conditions, I can

see between the ego and the non-ego, those two poles, no other medium but intuition as I have suggested it above in regard to philosophic criticism. Consider, by way of a counter-test, the unconscious work of a great creator. Do you believe that men like Dostoievsky, Stendhal, or Meredith, built the beyond of themselves by juxtaposing causes in order to obtain facts? Did they not, on the contrary, step out immediately into the life of others, and has not the creation of a character by them the value of a personal and absolute act? Have they not proceeded in the manner of God? And on the other hand, is such a character a phantom or does he obey the laws of a vital equilibrium which bind him by subtle necessities to an independent *nature*? I think these questions summon replies which I do not need to indicate.

Here we are dealing with dramatic intuition, which is the faculty of making others participate in our personal life, not by an indirect act of reason, but within the very movement which expresses that existence. There is no question of a so-called 'objective' knowledge of individuals, a knowledge always simplified by practical needs; it is a question of the impossibility for us to eliminate others when

it comes to the itemizing of our ego and our propensity to live and to think in the direction of others, so to speak, a propensity common to creators of fictive life and to animators of the mind. This notion of others is also extensible and can be applied to the individual duration of a man or of a character in a novel as well as to the tendencies of a country, of a class, or of humanity. For all I know the secret goal of life may be to free us of self, or at least to attain to somewhere beyond self. Certainly the passage from the ego to the non-ego, the most important event perhaps in human life, cannot be effected originally by means of the clear and distinct intelligence, and can be explained only by the presence in us, to use Leibniz's terms, of the confused perceptions of the universe.

There can be no complete personal experience which does not set going the experience of others, and this through the medium of a dramatic intuition, consequently a synthetic intuition. And it is upon this intuition that intelligence must react. The great defect of rationalism as applied to knowledge of life is that by it the individual is generalized instead of, so to put it, *augmented,* for thus the links fastening thought to the individual are cut

and the concrete development of the latter is arrested.

The sketching out of an intuitive nature, intermediate between reality and idea, and essential principle of the latter, has been the work of what is called *grosso modo* impressionism. It is worth remarking that the latter, by being placed instinctively on the hither side of the perception of common sense, is turned in a way towards the subject in order that the object may be attained. That average and rational architecture which we had become accustomed to take for normal vision is then replaced by primitive sensations and their individual shades, by the affective diffusion accompanying them and distributing their values, and by the associations of passive and unawaited ideas. And thereupon, by the decomposition of the object into subjective elements, impressionism reveals an acute and hallucinating sense of things. It seems that in relaxing his objective tension, in abandoning himself to his stream of feeling, man espouses reality more intimately. Here appears an inevitable equivocation through which Bergsonian thought has often been led astray. It is a point of capital

importance; let us try to treat it as precisely as possible.

This greater intimacy with things is an illusion: what one should say is, a greater intimacy with self. Before impressionism objects were perceived in bulk, in their rough outlines, globally, to employ a word which has served in recent French controversies. The degrees of the relations between the object and the ego had been expressed perfectly by the 'something' of the classics or by the massive images of the poets. Impressionism, precisely, gives names to the 'somethings,' distinguishes some from others by notations and variations of movement and rhythm: it analyzes each line which had appeared simple and shows it to be composed of divergent schemes, each set which had appeared single and reveals its hitherto secret multiplicity; through making sensible the parts of objects which before it we did not perceive, impressionism expresses their individuality and thereby the unity of any such object, its very existence, is compromised. Such at least is the *apparent* result of impressionism: in reality the object, a simple variable of perception which, taken in itself, is a pure entity, is not de-

composed: *what is decomposed is our sensitive and affective impression of it;* that is to say that at the limit each point of our sensitive apparatus ought to be occupied by a particular sensation and affective tonus. That there is no correspondence between our impression of the object and the image of it offered by common sense is obvious; but our impression does not in the least transport us 'into the heart' of that object; merely a more complete picture of our reactions in the face of the object is drawn up. It is only by an illusion, I repeat, that it has been possible to endow the object with a sensible enrichment which concerns only the subject. That intuition which transports us 'into the interior of things' transports us in fact into the interior of ourselves.

How therefore arises that sense of reality which is incontestably impressionism's most precious gift? Through the fact that the object which is perceived only through the spectacles of common sense is no longer felt by us, we are under the anaesthetic of habit. Only let a circumstance awakening lively and naïf impressions in us occur and *we become aware of ourselves in front of the object.* Impressionism is unrivalled for making us apprehend life

at the instant when it is being made, *before* the artificial control of perception and concept;[8] but nothing does more to lead astray and corrupt thought than the realistic interpretation put upon impressionism. For opposite impressionism two divergent ways open, and we must take one or the other according as to whether we wish to surpass our impression or whether on the contrary we wish to dissolve the object in it; and this necessary choice is not imposed upon him who believes that impressionism will take him into the heart of reality. Thanks to impressionism we again come into contact with ourselves and complicate infinitely our reactions in front of things; thereby our relations with the latter become more intimate; but this experience expresses the subject's variations of attitude, not in the least a modification in itself of the object. One strong proof of the subjective character of impressionism is the preponderant rôle played in it by the affective life.

I insist on impressionism because it may be either altogether useful or altogether harmful to the progress of the mind. For lack of a clear view of the philosophical problem which it raises one runs

[8] Vide the essay on Conrad, page 140.

the risk of frittering away its veritable riches by obstinately demanding from it what it cannot give. Certainly impressionism is the basic ingredient of every fecund modern intelligence, but just as certainly the use of this marvellous and perilous instrument may put intelligence out of gear. I think the work of Marcel Proust perfectly significant in this respect. My study of the 'Intermittences of the Heart' has shocked certain of Proust's admirers by the summary character of the so slightly justified judgments it contains. Those pages had the value of a vote: they expressed a vital attitude, the consequence of reflections which are not perhaps altogether gratuitous, and I may be permitted to sum them up here.

Impressionism sets us afloat, suppresses the artificial intermediaries between reality and ourselves, and by maintaining us constantly in the presence of life makes us forearmed against the sophism of cause and fact. Further, because it brings us back to the hither side of common-sense perception, and as it were to its source, it invites us to a revision of the ideas guiding us; but this latter task becomes possible only if first this world of sensibility with its mirror-like facets is integrated by intelligence.

Note that the required effort is not superhuman. The state of anarchy is not so serious as one would be tempted to believe. In spite of our worst extravagances we are moving towards unity: I mean that in us the unity of the dislocated and scattered object is remade, *this time in a purely sentimental form*. Indeed all subjective reactions, affective or otherwise, through which common-sense perception has been deformed, are nevertheless grouped around a specific unity of reaction and depend on that indefinable and global shade which warns us that we are in the presence of one thing and not of another. For the interpretation of such a thing the dictionary is only of little assistance: we seem to be solicited by I know not what more substantial and more subtle reality. Thus are formed in us *psychic equivalents* of things containing within themselves the principle of their elucidation. Through the concentration of impressionism reality is translated into human tendencies and these in turn have to be translated by analysis. The thing to be understood is displaced and situated between common-sense reality and intelligence: that is what we were calling just now the astral body of the object.

No one has felt this sliding of reality more in-

tensely than Proust did in sight of the steeples of Martinville. It may be that in these celebrated pages one should discern, with Charles Du Bos, the start of a Platonism which the author failed to develop later, but I believe that from that moment of suspense when he no longer recognized in the features of things what he divined about them confusedly, Proust allowed himself to be guided by a sure instinct: the venue of his ideas is assuredly that mixed zone of being in which the phantoms of the affective world pass one after the other. Be that as it may, Proust's essential effort has consisted in transporting to the plane of the clear and distinct consciousness those impressionist formations which I have named psychic equivalents of the object and in transforming them into intellectual equivalents. Hence the extreme originality of his analysis: for it bears not on things in so far as they are pretended independent of us, but upon ourselves in so far as we integrate our reactions in the face of things; he raises to the full light of consciousness what seemed to be eluding him by definition. Thus Benjamin Crémieux has had good reason to make of Proust the model impressionist: indeed, see how he goes about it: instead of seeking to render an

account of the object, he succeeds in *defining* the affective states corresponding to it, and I need not recall in detail to the reader with what richness of imagery, of association, with what exquisite passages from motive to motive, what a surprising dosage of the ineffable, what a superhuman memory of the frames of experience. Proust's gift cannot be estimated: he seems to have created concepts of the lived, the organic, the vegetable, and the inconceivable, and to have succeeded by a unique miracle in having made time stand still in front of him; and as he never went outside the text offered to him by his sensibility, he deciphers only that text, so that he reinforces and sculptures our impression even while he elucidates it, instead of dissolving it as so many analysts have. He has established a close reciprocity between intelligence and sensation from which the latter has benefited. He has extended nervous tissue into the imponderable regions of the intellect.

Such is, in my opinion, Proust's title to glory and his *exeat* to eternity, but his greatness must not be allowed to mask his inadequacies. However great he may be, he is only the last and most complete subjectivist, the last and most sincere of those self-

confessors of whom Rousseau is the eponym. The Proustians' sophism—less gratuitous certainly than that of cause and fact, but not less deceptive—consists in the translating of their master's experience into objective terms which relate to the object, to truth, to *what is*, a testimony which one suspects of being affected by some radical vice. Now, it seems that beside the positive gift which I have recalled, Proust suffered from an impotence to become conscious of life otherwise than in purely passive conditions of receptivity. This impotence has been considered an advantage, as if the tension of the will and the imagination must inevitably confuse truth for us. Here we reach the core of the problem: after having been rendered by impressionism the immense service of being united with life, must we be asked to deliver up to it the very objective impassibility which we had refused to yield to the theorizers of fact? If the spiritual world is not a procession of ordered and ineluctable causes, is it then only a kaleidoscope of impressions the incoherence of which constitutes the foundation of things?

Please consider that Proust's example does not in the least compel us to accept this lazy interpreta-

tion of life; his passivity is a defect, not a quality, it *facilitated* his analysis, but nothing entitles us to conclude that it *enriched* it. In short, he is not passive in order better to know things and by method, he is passive because he cannot be otherwise, because the creative parts of his mind, imagination, will, and intellectual combination, *do not in him resist the first attacks of sensibility*. In other terms, Proust suffered from a fundamental and irreducible discord between his imagination and his sensibility, between his prevision and his vision, and this prevented him from applying to the treatment of reality the spiritual forces which he had spent in imagining that reality. Reread those significant pages: the discovery of Mme. de Guermantes's face and the discovery of Balbec church: never better nor with a more hallucinating power has there been expressed the negation of the subject by the object, the brutal obliteration of the imaginary figure, the mind's stupor in the face of that beyond of itself which it had not been wise enough to foresee. Solitary, and following his subjective dream to the point of making of it a sort of mysticalness of the word and of association, Proust charged his sensibility with a living force which multiplied infin-

itely the shock of experience, tore down at a blow all the veils interposed between reality and us, and made himself believe for a moment that the latter was absolutely impenetrable. After this sort of explosion nothing solid, nothing valid subsisted, except the mere passive data provided by sensibility. By this brusque and fatal fall into sensation, Proust was naturally brought *to question thought afresh,* and it was by going over, line by line, the model which he had drawn before experience, by making a scrupulous tracing of it over the object, that Proust, through the roundabout of intelligence, recovered his vital equilibrium. Thus the progress of Proustian thought consists in a transfer of mental activity from the future into the past, the past always winning spiritually over the future, memory being supplied with a precise method for correcting the fanciful forms which imagination had at first traced anyhow. Consequence: there is no direct effect of spiritual activity on life, but only one on the memory of life embalmed in sensibility alone: intelligence serves only itself, so to speak, and imagination serves only to help the intelligence to define the almost ineffable shades of affectivity. Even as in the philosophy of fact, in the Proustian

psychology intelligence, by relation to life, is allowed only a *retrospective* function, which distinguishes it clearly from reality, which, being fixed by memory, it analyzes patiently. The work of Proust is a genealogy of the intellectual consciousness. Hence the illusion of duration given by his painting of beings: it is he who is enduring in fact, or rather it is his experience; but imagine a psychologist beginning to write at the moment in which Proust ends his book, and you will agree that such a psychologist might very well replace time by space, I mean that it would be possible for him to contract their story into portraits in the manner of La Bruyère's.[9] I need only, in proof of this, that capital remark which he makes regarding Swann, that observation is unnecessary in psychology, it being possible to deduce a man's acts surely, once the circumstances are given. This is a mechanism which neither Mr. Bourget nor Charles Maurras would disavow. The subjective character of impressionism, which he so marvellously interpreted but did not surpass, the dissociation of the intellectual and the spiritual, and the realism of sensation,

[9] To put it more precisely: the duration of subjective experience in Proust is revealed by the clearly distinct analysis of the evolution of the characters, which evolution describes a rather Balzacian curve.

such are the reasons which reduce Proust, once he *conceives* life, to the factitious objectivism of those who have no immediate commerce with it.

Proust's disciples tend to erect into a system what in him was an accident, a kind of spiritual defeat, and it is partly to dissuade them that I have tried to sum up for them the message of Meredith. These two names have often been brought together, and with very little reason, for between the intellectual demands of Proust and Meredith the differences are infinitely more important than the resemblances. While Proust, in order better to undergo life, relaxes and stretches, Meredith becomes aware of life thanks only to a tension and an orientation of his whole being, so that experience for him is an affirmation at the same time as a trial. In him sensation, imagination, will, and intelligence are closely bound up and *contemporaneous:* he creates, if one may say so, what he understands, in such a way that his creation incessantly modifies reality without betraying it. But this reality is not in the least the reality of Proust, which reminds us appositely that in the things of life the nature of the known depends greatly on the nature of the act of knowing. Meredith's world is not an illusion

any more than Proust's: at any moment its psychic existence and breadth may be verified; only it cannot be *given* to a passive sensibility, it can only be attained by the conjugated efforts of all our faculties. Indeed does not Meredith lead us forthwith into an ideal universe, and one must add that we penetrate this in his wake only rarely and as if by a miracle: even as Jacques Rivière profoundly remarked, with human depressions and exaltations he was able to compose a new heroism. But the participation of will and intellect in experience is sufficient to modify our perspectives of reality, to make us sound from it another note. Far be it from me to want to make Meredith say more than he had the intention of saying, more than it was suitable for an artistic psychologist who was not a philosopher to have said: I contend merely that the *artistic* success of his work renders possible an infinitely fecund rational interpretation of life, thanks precisely to the close harmony seen in him between creation and judgment, two faculties which rarely get on well together. For the possibility of such a work is a revelation of the existence of two conditions for a veritable spiritual liberation: in the first place, that a concrete authen-

tic experience of life can be realized, one that overflows the confines of a purely passive sensibility; in the second place, that in order to deepen reality it is necessary not to relax in the face of it, but, quite on the contrary, to go towards it armed with an active *intention* and a will ever on the alert. Thanks to the instinct of a novelist of genius and the intellectual intuition of a highly cultivated psychologist, Meredith was able both to create living beings gifted with an intrinsic unity and activity and to bequeath to us a first conscious interpretation of his creation; he succeeded in the passage from the ego to the non-ego while furnishing us at the same time with the means of utilizing his success psychologically. Thereby his message is unique; let us not forget that he only starts and orients an effort which it is for us to accomplish. His work is a reality, an act which his rather miraculous character renders it difficult to generalize. He has integrated an impressionism more complex than that of Proust, and he has done it more correctly than he did, but he has not perceptibly surpassed the latter's philosophical level. Meredith is one of those rare and splendid creatures who facilitate the philosopher's task without rendering it use-

less, simply because their instinct inclines them to live in the right direction and their sensibility is pregnant with a sane and fecund thought. So does he give to us the courage to offer the following remarks rather than supply us with arguments to verify them.

The philosophy of fact and analytic impressionism both lead alike to a spiritual past-ism, the first by an arbitrary cut in the forest of causes, the second by its passivity and its choice of sensation as the unique medium of knowledge. Psychologically it is admitted by both that a thing can be known only when it is given and caused, that is to say, past and already detached from us; artistically their practitioners, professing themselves incapable of immediately 'setting' an imaginary being, affirming his unity and then abandoning him to his own duration, are reduced to composing sorts of mosaics, some of concepts, others of subjective impressions, destined more or less to replace living syntheses. This impotence to render their work independent, either of their ideas or of their ego, reveals to us the fundamental life of their analysis and incites us to seek its origin precisely in this psychological past-ism which they offer to us as the

best method of discovering truth. The work of the theorizers of fact is so evidently worthless that we may abandon it to its fate without further attending to it, but we cannot thus deal with impressionism, which is the only outlet on life we have. It is upon its capricious waves that we must navigate as best we can.

May I be allowed to indicate here briefly—and without prejudicing the results to which ulterior researches might lead—in what direction I consider we should steer? Having convinced ourselves that the Proustian work does not in the least express the foundation of things, the truth in itself, that it is only the experience-limit of a passive individual, one case among many cases, we acquire forthwith a great freedom of orientation, or to put it better, just freedom: we know henceforth that all impulsion, whether spontaneous or voluntary, is creative, *that it is in a certain measure for us to hatch what we desire to know about ourselves.* This restrictive measure is naturally furnished by experience, which remains the supreme test of our fancies. A novel in this respect may be considered as a vast and complex experience instituted for the purpose of knowing if the individuals imagined

by the author are livable, if their living unity is intrinsic and *accounts for itself* normally in the course of a given action; and from this aesthetic verification, if it succeeds, we may conclude that the mental gifts of the author give him a certain hold on life; for nothing authorizes us to establish a difference of kind between the faculty to create independent fictive beings and the faculty to create oneself or to influence the being of others. It is rather a matter of a difference in the casting of rôles.

In imitating the spontaneous attitude of the poet and the creator, which is also—as Maurois has finely shown—that of the leader of men, we shall not only foster our vital impulsions, but further and most of all, I insist, we shall infinitely enrich our knowledge. Evidently, for an intelligence not to paralyze, but to serve, life, not to trace co-ordinates in a space spread out ahead, but to espouse, without breaking up, the duration of an individual, of an action, or of a thought, it must give proof of a suppleness and a ductility unknown to the strategists of the concept or of passive impressionism. If in spite of remarkable efforts, it has not been possible to make impressionism cross the frontiers of

the ego, it is because impressionism is naturally disinterested from the object which is the origin of the impression. What matter personality and love to one who applies himself to dissolving them, to decomposing the states which a first sketch of experience has brought to birth in him? The states alone interest him, he becomes bogged in his ego, and often a feeble and brief contact with others is sufficient to release the storm. To deny love is his way of loving. In the same way, such great debates could not be carried on around personality if one realized that personality is not a thing which one sets down in front of one in order to discover if it is real or merely cut out of the stuff of dreams, but that, on the contrary, it is the ideal converging point of our efforts, and that we cannot get near it except by the internal impulse which drives us to affirm it. Thus personality is perhaps a myth, but it is in that case a myth closely linked to a reality, that of our effort to incorporate it with life. And one is brought to ask whether the constitution of our personality does not occur *outside ourselves*, through the composition of our acts and works, we ourselves possessing of it only its claim to affirmation. In any case, our primordial task is to main-

tain ourselves, as far as we possibly can, at the extreme point of our effort. Instead of which, we reverse Diogenes's argument, arresting our march in order to prove that movement does not exist.

At bottom all such fashionable theories are inspired by a worthless and already obsolete empiricism: by them sensation and reality are identified, and thus, unwittingly, they cannot help to solve the problem of knowledge. Whereas a sane and prudent idealism, seeing in sensibility indices of *reaction* and transforming these into indices of creation, will restore all its positive value to judgment, to the voluntary act transcending our present affectivity. The most extreme impressionism cannot convey to such an idealism the revelation of a more real reality dissimulated beneath the factitious veneer of common perception, but only a discord between such a perception and our present means. Considering this dissolution of the object in our ego as the first half of a functional readaptation, such an idealism understands the second half to consist of a new affirmation of the object, based on the data of the first passive experience, and all the resources of our intellect will not be too much to carry out this subtle adjustment, to bring about

successfully this deliverance from self which is undoubtedly the surest progress towards truth.

May I be pardoned for this too lengthy justification which, at least, should render sensible to the reader the reasons that have led me to link together the following essays: they are all intended to establish that the creation of life and of the material for thought, whether imaginary or real, must obey the same laws, and that it is possible to expose the sophisms of those who claim to suppress the creative share, whether of the will, of the imagination, or of the intelligence, in the affirmation of existence. These essays are an invitation to modify our vital attitude and our intellectual methods, to restitute to science what in all justice belongs to science, in order that we, the living, may find our real bent and movement. That is why these ideas, still young and self-distrusting, now appear at the bar surrounded by illustrious defenders.

# II

# THE METHOD OF BALZAC

*The Recital, and the Aesthetics of the Novel*

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INASMUCH as Balzac's novels are evidently composed of heterogeneous elements, it is allowable to ask oneself to what extent these novels are, properly speaking, works of art. This problem appears to me to present a double interest: it is related to the as yet still very confused aesthetics of the novel, and it concerns the least mysterious of novelists, he who has most frankly laid out his means of procedure before the reader's eyes; so that its solution will enable us perhaps to define with some precision two or three points of the art of novel-writing. But it is altogether necessary first to sketch roughly the figure of the novel, relying on the novelist's practice and upon a European experience already more than a century old.

One can say nothing valid about the novel until one has distinguished it from what, for lack of a better term, I shall call the *recital,* for the

excellent reason that, as the novel and the recital are interchangeable as to their object, they are constantly being taken for one another. Read, for example, these lines from a mind remarkable indeed, but not very familiar with the technique of the novel: 'There should be no essential differences between the novel and the natural recital of things which we have seen and heard. . . . There is only one law, but one carrying capital punishment: it is indispensable—and also it is sufficient—that the continuity should carry us along, and even *draw us up,* towards an end which may be the illusion of having lived an adventure violently or profoundly, or else that of the precise knowledge of invented individuals.' [1]

This intelligent definition, in addition to having the defect of applying equally well to the novel and the recital, allows it to be understood that the novel may well be an amorphous kind of composition, as little aesthetic as possible, always on the verge of being fused with pure nothingness; which is very far from being correct. A successful novel, on the contrary, is no doubt the most artistic of all kinds of composition, precisely because its aes-

[1] Paul Valéry in his *Homage to Marcel Proust.*

thetic balance is the most internal and the most independent of apparent and fixed rules; and this is just why it is as difficultly definable and as easily recognizable as an intelligent judgment and an able act. This is how one might distinguish the novel from the recital: *The novel is the representation of events which take place in time, a representation submitted to the conditions of apparition and development of these events.—The recital is the presentation of events which have taken place, and of which the reproduction is regulated by the narrator in conformity with the laws of exposition and persuasion.* A provisional and most imperfect distinction, but one that is better than nothing: does it not enable us to recognize *Adolphe* as a pure recital, *Madame Bovary* as a novel, and *Le Cousin Pons* as a production which is partly novel and partly recital without being altogether either one or the other? But let us examine it closely and seek to express its whole sense. This seems to us the best way to set going the criticism of the Balzacian method.

The essential difference is then that the event of the novel *takes place* whereas that of the recital *has taken place,* that the recital is ordered around a

past and the novel in a present not verbal but psychological. The event of the recital, withdrawn from the action of time and from an actual place in space, is put into ideas, if I may thus express myself; the narrator has therefore the right to represent it by a series of more or less abstract signs which define the scene or the state of mind to be reproduced: 'The marquise made him understand, by one of those manœuvres at which women excel, that he did not occupy the first place in her heart. She opened with a rather lively scene in which she convinced him of coldness on several points,' &c. 'Ready to defy society, but hesitant and arriving at artifice as the result of her scruples; having more obstinacy than character, more fondness than enthusiasm, more head than heart,' &c. Here the recital substitutes for the scene of the marquise and for the concrete painting of Mme. de Langeais's character, abstract schemes which simplify them: the recital makes events *known,* it does not bring them *to birth.*

Treating of the past, of the lived, of the terminated, the recital is therefore not obliged to respect the characters of the actual and living development of a scene or of a psychic complex: it may sub-

stitute for them, in fact most often it does substitute for them, a mode of presentation nearer, on the one hand to reasoning and the intellectual laws of combination, and on the other hand to painting and the general laws of description. For, as soon as one ceases to express an actual life carrying along belief by its very unrolling in time, as soon as one wants to recount, give an account of, make known, one willingly has recourse to the most proper means of demonstrating, of convincing, and one seeks the reasons for acts and the intelligible continuity of sentiments which is not often to be mistaken for their living continuity. As the object of the narration is no longer a function of the individual consciousnesses and of their relation in a concrete space and time, and as one must convince the more in proportion as one makes live the less, the narrator often reascends the causal series as far as the abstract region of general causes, and displaces the work's centre of gravity, which he situates in an ideal spot. Thus, *the recital tends to the substitution of an order of conceptual exposition for the order of living production, and of rational proofs for aesthetic proofs.* Of course things do not happen as openly as the preceding reflections might lead one

to think. We have described the narrator's more or less conscious work before the writing proper, and everything occurs thereafter as if the latter were immediately reproducing reality. But a recital may easily be recognized from the narrator's point of view and the freedom with which he moves about; from the method of exposition, usually deductive, whereby we are led from the abstract general to the concrete individual; from the order of the analysis, linked rationally and independent of the action to the point of sometimes forming isolated and self-sufficient groups; from the purely illustrative value of this action whereby nothing is added to the analysis, and, *on the contrary, the analysis seems to determine and justify the action;* from the narrator's relative independence towards the conditions of spontaneous production of life; and finally, from the air and tone of the narration, from the manner in which the author adds, takes off, combines, produces, and links together, the abstract parts and the concrete parts of the recital.

But more than that. A recital is neither a pleading nor a report to the Council of State; it is not a purely rational work; it is in direct relation with

the life which it recounts, the painting of living reality, and the success of such painting remains after all its principal objective and the measure of its validity. The narrator has therefore to reascend the slope of his first conception and to establish a relation of reciprocal justification between his ideas and the concrete representations which form the aesthetic part of the work. But a recital will always betray the modalities of its genesis and the intellectual work which has presided at its formation. However much the deceptive pieces of scenery may be multiplied, the effects varied, and the narrator's emotions be justly and beautifully conveyed, it will be impossible to prevent the thing told from being *terminated* and its representation from having become independent and obeying only the laws of combination of the impersonal mind. Hence the presentation of the characters will be *descriptive,* which means that their existence will have to be determined by the description, and hence the analysis will be more likely dependent on the support of causal links rather than on that of living continuities. Further, as the course of the recital will not be regulated by the movement of life, that will have necessarily to be replaced by more or less

intellectual combinations, the linking-up of which will make the work 'move along,' and balance it at the same time. What in France is called a well-made novel should often be regarded as merely a recital ably planned, in the sense in which one says that a chess-player ably plans his game.

It is now easy for us to set against the scheme of the pure recital the scheme of the pure novel. The novel seeks its basis and centre of gravity there where the recital seeks its confirmation and conclusion: in the spontaneous and immediate evocation of moral and physical life, in the unforeknowable course of a psychic duration or of an action. Scenes and analyses are to be met with alike in the recital and the novel, but in such different forms that no practised reader can mistake one for the other. The novelist translates life at the moment at which it is being made, he faithfully expresses its sinuosities and its rhythm, and his intelligence appears to be directed rather than to be directing. The pure novel is a testimony, either to the faculty bestowed upon the author of rendering the atmosphere and the shades of an imaginary scene as if he were the spectator of a real scene, or else to his faculty of living the internal life

of a character who is not himself. Far from being, as in a recital, the illustrations of a thought which has prepared and constructed them, the scenes of a novel are the unique testimonies of its realism, in the same way as its characters' motives, far from representing the last terms of a causal reasoning, are the first data of all ulterior reasoning or thought. Hence there exists an infallible means of recognizing a true novel: it is sufficient to see that the linking-up of the sensory and psychological representations is not dependent upon a reasoning or an order of production other than that of life, and that the characters are not approached, drawn, from the outside, but seized by a kind of intuition analogous to that whereby we are put into relation with living individuals. Let me rapidly indicate some examples. The dryness and the thinness of line of Stendhal's novels might make us mistake them for recitals, especially as the author's thought wanders from page to page and that he makes scenes and stumps of scenes appear as his fancy pleases; but examine the way in which his characters' acts and sentiments are brought to birth and successively determined: you will see that Stendhal notes them on

the run, as they go by, synthetically, without ever bringing them about or interrelating them with a logical thread, so that this celebrated analyst is, in fact, guided by a series of intuitive syntheses. Likewise, Conrad's novels are composed of recitals which summon one another, the same story being recounted by several narrators; yet each of his recitals is a novel because each narrator is a creation of Conrad's, answering faithfully to our definition, and because these narrators express life through purely aesthetic syntheses.

It goes without saying that the novel and the recital never differ as sharply in reality as in their definitions. Many recitals—most of Balzac's, notably—end by opening out into the novel, and there are few novels in which the construction, the notation of feelings, the transitions, and the conception of the plot, fail to reveal in the author a desire to be intelligible and the taste for repetitions and for intellectual combinations. But the important thing is that we should know that the genesis of one and the genesis of the other are essentially distinct. Now, according to us, that of the novel is always related to aesthetics, whereas that of the recital is ambiguous and often extra-aesthetic. The

human and non-human reality of the novel is an immediate synthesis, an 'absolute position,' *as much for the author as for the reader;* a synthesis which is justified and demonstrated, if one may say so, by the harmony and intrinsic balance of the development. The novel, like life, bathes us in an initial *presence* and orients us towards the future; we know its characters with certitude but without knowing why, and we no more dream of contesting the reality of the scenes than we should dream of denying the events which occur beneath our windows. The novelist can attain to such a result only by an intuition and by aesthetic processes, whereas the author of the recital tends to *prove* the aesthetic part of his work by extra-aesthetic considerations and processes. In the novel the idea is suggested by the concrete representation which reveals it as it were transparently; in the recital this representation is determined by the idea, or at least exhibited according to an ideal and abstract line.

If the following remarks are right, Balzac had the idea and the will to carry out the novel even as I have tried to define it and even as the Russians, the English, and the French of the second half of

the last century, carried it out; but, prevented by different historical and psychological circumstances, he was able to achieve ordinarily only a compromise between the novel and the recital, a powerful and artificial synthesis, which, laboured though showing genius, is neither altogether a work of thought nor altogether a work of art. In other words, desiring to produce a striking effect by the evocation of concrete reality, he obtained this result only by abstract means, supporting all the parts of that reality by a conceptual framework and conceptual joints. Hence results a constant confusion of the aesthetic proof with the rational proof, the reader never knowing precisely if the feeling which he has of the *reality* of a scene is not an illusion due to the *truth* of the abstract commentary framing it. Balzac carries out his synthesis in front of us instead of presenting it to us ready-made, and this renders the verification of his judgments relatively easy. With a disturbing tenacity and a proud audacity he prepares, fashions, and grinds the work even as Père Goriot denatured his gilt dish at night in the sordid attic of the Pension Vaquer. Hence we shall have no trouble in determining successively how he sets up the

reality of his characters, how he expresses the evolution of character, and how he conceives the direction and dynamism of the action.

## THE POSITION OF THE CHARACTERS

We have said that in the novel the existence of the characters should be an 'absolute position,' and it is easy to see why: as the novel evokes actual life at the moment in which it is occurring, the characters forcibly are individuals whose existence and unity can be seized only by an intuition of wholeness: they must live before they have been thought. Dmitri Rudin, Mme. Bovary, Jude, and Diana of the Crossways, characters in genuine novels, these we know by watching them live, but first and especially by the indefinable sentiment of their *being*. On the contrary, Balzac's characters have been ideas thought before being living individuals, and so a question at once rises to our lips: are they individuals? The answer is *that they end by becoming so,* an answer which raises grave difficulties. It has often been said that Balzac minutely prepared the protagonists of his dramas, but it would be better to say, in my opinion, that he *manufact-*

*ured* them ably, *because the individual once determined adds nothing by himself to the abstract lines of which he is the offset.* Let us be more precise: generally Balzac composes his characters by combining three sorts of processes: the establishment of a civic and historical certificate which situates the character in time and in a definite social group; a psychological deduction which, starting from general conceptions, ends in a few traits constituting his character; a description almost exclusively visual, which includes both his habitual frame and his habitation, as well as his features, body, and clothing.

The conception of the character is the most important of these processes; it represents his genesis. Now it is easy to see that in Balzac this is a purely intellectual operation, *a priori in relation to the individual,* the particular traits attributed to the latter being the specific differences obtained by divisions and subdivisions carried out in a particular style. This style is ordinarily psycho-social, for the conception and establishment of a civic certificate are most frequently in Balzac only a single operation of the mind, which often adopts the mechanical movement of a rather monotonous dichotomy:

Butscha (*Modeste Mignon*) is contrasted with Goupil (*Ursule Mirouët*), Cousin Pons with Cousine Bette, Mme. de l'Estorade with Clotilde de Grandlieu (*Mémoires de Deux Jeunes Mariés*), the Marquis d'Espard with his wife (*L'Interdiction*), the acting magistrate Popinot with the investigating magistrate Camusot, &c. These are abstract distinctions operated upon concepts and representing all the possibilities which result from given psychological and social circumstances. A process analogous to that of the moralists, notably of La Bruyère, and implying that individualization is a kind of illustration and of trial for thought and not an initial synthesis. Balzac goes so far in this direction that his most delicate and apparently most individualized portraits have on their reverse side an abstract psycho-social framework: *Le Lys dans la Vallée*, for example, is less the story of Mme. de Mortsauf than the exhaustive analysis of the reciprocal action of chaste love and a definite social situation. And it is this analysis which confers upon the work its continuity and its solidity.

The end of the description is to give an appearance of individual life to these general types. Balzac displays in his descriptions a truly prodigious

visual intensity, but they are not always alive. A living description—reread those of Loti and Hardy —is composed of traits chosen in such a way that the synthesis of the object is carried out immediately in our consciousness, that we receive the *impression* of the whole even when we are given only one detail, and the relative freedom of imagination allowed to us is one of the factors in the intensity of the evocation: which means that the artist knows how to awaken in us an affective equivalent of the object representing it. Balzac, in giving us an integral inventory of the object, does indeed make us know it, but directly, brutally, by non-aesthetic means. If he does not mentally recompose it, bit by bit, the reader will be unable to seize it in its unity and will know of it only the portions which he is capable of embracing in one view; he is not given the means of becoming intimate with the reality spread out in front of him. More than that: instead of conferring upon this enumeration the unity of an immediate concrete vision, Balzac, by the technical terms he employs, even as by the very excess of details he sets down, draws the elements of the description towards their objective definition, thanks to their con-

ceptual essence: the Balzacian description is a reconstruction of the object in itself by an intelligence *which, after having seen, has conceived its vision, and which has reconstructed, according to an abstract line, its sensible experience.* Thus we discover even in the painting of persons and of their habitat this abstract determination, this passage through the concept which we found in the origin of the conception of types.

Be that as it may, the Balzacian description is a solid sensory basis for the position of individuals. Thus does Balzac's artifice consist in composing this description so as to establish a rigorous equivalence between the physical traits and the mental traits in order to make us know, by describing the person and the habitat (that is to say, according to Balzac's ideas, by doing the work of an artist), the character and the manners of the individual. He has even portrayed a woman *merely by describing where she lives!* [2] But that is only a disguise for a thought which remains abstract and deductive and which determines *a priori* the relation of the visible to the moral, and I believe that in this we have the explanation of those astonishing 'scientific' laws

[2] *La Vieille Fille.*

which made Taine smile. To sum up, on the one hand the genesis of the individual is a deductive conceptual combination, on the other his appearance is the rigorous symbol of the concepts whereby he has been formed. The subtle shades whereby Balzac characterizes him only throw into relief the abstract quality of the specification. No play, no space, left between the individual and the abstract co-ordinates determining him: the meeting-place of several general schemes, he is always on the point of vanishing in ideas, and his unity is maintained only by the convincing intensity of the Balzacian vision. But, as we have already seen, what is individual, aesthetically speaking, is an immediate experience incapable of being communicated by a rational subdivision. In the position of the characters Balzac's ideas approach indefinitely to being individual without ever becoming so, like those fractional series which tend indefinitely towards the unit.

### THE EVOLUTION OF CHARACTER AND OF THE ACTION

Let us now see if the individual rids himself of his abstract framework during the course of the

novel, if he frees himself by acting. We reach here one of the most singular points of Balzacian aesthetics, I mean an intrinsic antithesis between the conception of life and its expression. If the aesthetic synthesis of the individual is not carried out, his determination, on the other hand, is so rigorous that he could not escape from his definition. Hence arises the sort of certainty marking the acts of Balzacian heroes, often taken for an artistic quality when it is of a logical nature: their evolution being a deduction, we do not have, as in a novel, the impression of being in front of the same person, but that of witnessing the development of a same sentiment. *This is to say that the evolution of the individual remains external to the individual, being the deduction of the psychological scheme of which he is the vehicle.* It will be easy for us, it seems to me, to verify the correctness of this proposition by showing in Balzac a tendency to regulate the curve of the recital, either by a psychological process determinable *a priori,* or by an objective action external to the individuals and in relation to which they play very much the part of pawns on a chessboard.

The movement of the Balzacian recital is ensured

by four factors often combined in the same work: the evolution of a passion, the deduction of a psychological 'case,' the treatment of a well-defined juridical affair, a series of intellectual combinations commonly called plot. We shall see that Balzac thus chooses dynamic factors lending themselves to a pure conceptual working.

The monomaniac character of passion in Balzacian heroes has often been remarked upon: this is because in reality the curve of the passion is determined *a priori* and that the character possessed by it merely represents its successive stages. For this passion presents two characters: it is absolute, and it increases regularly and fatally. It is thus possible to describe it without a constant recourse to the intuition of the individual, who, far from regulating its evolution, is entirely drawn by it. Balzac troubles so little to modify the curve of passion that once there appears in one of his recitals a passionate character, one can at once foresee the continuation and end of the work. Goriot, Grandet, Claës, Hulot—these are one and the same man placed in different psychological circumstances, but not so different that their fixed idea

can fail to produce sensibly the same effects. The monomaniac, for example, is certain, after having brought about the misfortune of his family, to have a return of tenderness and humanity, soon followed by a definitive relapse. The character's actions, extremely simplified, will be *examples* and *illustrations;* his words, when they are not, as too often they are in Goriot, analyses disguised as confidences, might be called *definition-words,* I mean to say that they sum up the hero's character in a striking short-cut *wherein the author's analytic work is often sensible* (Hulot's 'But shall I be able to take along the little one?'; dying Mme. Marneffe's 'I must act God'; Mme. de Serisy's 'I am sent to save the dead'; Grandet's 'You will have to settle with me for that there'; &c.), so that these heart-cries are rather too much also the author's cries. Here Balzac is inspired directly by the classical comic tradition, and it must be recognized that he obtains effects as remarkable as they are moving. The painting of passion well suits his imagination, both excessive and stiff, both convincing and clumsy; it enables him to imagine a living line without being obliged to re-enter incessantly into contact with

life; and his vision is sustained and linked by the quasi-logical objective development of the fixed idea.

In the position and the abstract deduction of psychological cases Balzac expends treasures of intelligence which ensure to him an incontestable sovereignty over all moralists present, past, and no doubt future. None has known better than he the average life and the thousand aspects which may be assumed by a social idea set in contact with experience: as to this, one has only to reread the admirable analyses in which he defines the relations of the betrothed and of man and wife (*Mémoires de Deux Jeunes Mariés, Une Double Famille, Le Contrat de Mariage, Une Fille d'Eve,* &c.). The portrait of Natalie Evangelista, for example, is a masterpiece, and Félix de Vandenesse's attitude towards his wife brings about one of the most profoundly and most delicately natural situations ever conceived. But from the point of view concerning us in this study, it is essential to remark that the accent bears in these recitals on abstract analysis, conceived and treated at the side of the action and before it, and that this action plays only a complementary part. It seems that, rather than works

of art, we are reading the reports of a magistrate of the heart who, going beyond the average plane of historical judgments, bares the roots of a social action. Balzac's process consists here of establishing a relation between certain characters and certain situations, at the same time distinguishing as little as possible, and always through observations of detail, the individual from the interests he represents.

In nearly all Balzac's recitals we find a juridical action possessed of an intrinsic logic and an objective development, but in some of them this action assumes an importance such that it becomes the work's veritable subject: the marriage contract in the recital bearing this title, the suit for interdiction in *L'Interdiction*, the bankruptcy in *César Birotteau*. Consider that this action is obedient to laws of development which are proper to itself and which result from a juridical, a jurisprudential reasoning. Are we not meeting here with the same artifice and the same roundabout as in the painting of passion, the author proceeding according to an objective line determinable *a priori*, the work's fatality being in fact only a conceptual combination of a logical rather than an aesthetic nature, and

the expression of life being subordinated to its conception?

Thus in Balzac the creation and movement of life remain external to intuition. In the same way that the individual is not set up but determined, in the same way that his feelings are not expressed as they appear, but conceived, deduced, and applied on to the character, so the evolution of this character is regulated by abstract combinations in which he plays the rôle of a part in a machine. *Thus indeed are these characters not conceived in order to live, but in order to serve as pawns in a manœuvre leading to a tactical result.* You who have witnessed with such excitement these magnificent births in which intelligence succeeded in producing life, you who rejoice at touching in these beings of reason the flesh and bones of your fellowmen, and who are aware of, under the rigid envelope of the idea, the palpitation of your heart's feelings, must be, sometimes as early as the middle of the book, disappointed, must bid farewell to your friends of a few pages, for they are about to cease to live: they are seized by the plot, arranged by it on the battlefield, led by it along its narrow and artificial ways, compelled to return to the author exactly

what he has given to them. No doubt their acts, their gestures, their behaviour, and their cries will remind you of them, but how reduced, how thin, how mechanized! Thus the pieces on a chessboard each have their shape, their place, their proper movement, and the field of their course exactly defined: but this apparent diversity only throws the more into relief the *a priori-ness* and the rigidity of their determination. Who, in reading *Le Cousin Pons* or *La Recherche de l'Absolu,* has not been struck by the difference in validity between the preparation and the development? This latter work notably has the effect for us of a god's torso terminating in a child's legs. Now this defect is due precisely to the characters' all being determined together, at the start, and once and for all, whereas in a living novel the individuals are naturally created on each page of the book. Besides, the plot's process enables Balzac to substitute his intellect for the vital movement and to make of his characters *directly utilizable elements of a combination.* Thus Vautrin is perhaps the most living creature in Balzac, because Vautrin when planning men's destinies is identical with Balzac planning his plot.

Whence arises, therefore, the extreme animation of the Balzacian recitals? I should be tempted to write that Balzac's stories are chapters by a moralist illustrated by a man of extraordinary visual power and rendered by the plot as thrilling as serials. A manner of gilding the pill, of accommodating the representation of man to the visual angle of a democracy whose members are hurried, not very cultivated, and fond of strong sensations? No doubt, but more than that: there is also the powerful personality of a poet, I would dare to say of a lyrist, who is also an admirable thinker, and who, as little capable as his contemporaries of creating beings both entire and free, has succeeded, by a prodigious effort of the intelligence, in manufacturing a kind of abstract mould of life offering in hollow its exact form, but rigid and simplified. By a singular but comprehensible irony Balzac's thought remains, in so far as it is thought, infinitely more supple than the living form representing it; of an incomparable fitness, it is ordinarily betrayed by its illustration. Thus (to choose one example among a thousand) has it been possible for him to be reproached with having badly painted society people whereas he has drawn up

admirable psychological pictures of them: this is because criticisms are made to bear on the scenes in which the characters live, not on the analyses in which they are defined. And what is to be said about those scenes shown without abstract preparations, such as the one between Crevel and Baroness Hulot with which *La Cousine Bette* opens, and those, alas! of *La Femme de Trente Ans* and of *L'Envers de l'Histoire Contemporaine?* Isn't this an insurrection by romanticism taking advantage of a momentary absence of the intelligence?

Nevertheless, let us be fair: if our analyses are correct, Balzac's best recitals must be those fulfilling the following conditions: reduction of the abstract co-ordinates to a few simple lines *naturally* symbolical; reduction of the character and life of individuals to a few simple acts susceptible of being *naturally* distinguished as little as possible from general ideas and schemes; the *naturally* determined character of the portion of life shown. Among the recitals possessing these qualities let us mention: *Le Père Goriot, Eugénie Grandet, César Birotteau, Un Grand Homme de Province à Paris, Une Fille d'Eve, Le Médecin de Campagne, Le Contrat de Mariage,* the first part of *La Recherche de l'Absolu,*

what has reached us of *Les Paysans,* &c. In these works it does indeed seem that Balzac attained perfection: the characters remain always in the shadow of the ideas directing and protecting them, there are no colourless and impersonal dialogues, mere substitutes for narration, but timely 'lines' marking the psychological stages, a simple scheme drawing in discreetly the character's whole, sentimental notions happily deduced from the situation, sober paintings, a modest plot, some marvellous short-cuts, and always that general bearing of the particular action which makes one think of Molière, a Molière without any comic acidity and obliged to stiffen incessantly to ward off romanticism, which has the effect of making him a little awkward. Unforgettable pages, truly worthy of Apollo's crown, and representing a great aesthetic progress on Diderot and all the great French intellectualists, from whom they proceed while extending them into another sphere.

# III

# AUTOBIOGRAPHY AND THE NOVEL

## *The Example of Stendhal*

# III

# AUTOBIOGRAPHY AND THE NOVEL[1]

> Le *vrai,* sur les plus grandes comme sur les plus petites choses, me semble presque impossible à atteindre, du moins un vrai *un peu detaillé.* Mme. de Tracy me disait: on ne peut plus atteindre au vrai que dans le roman. Je vois tous les jours davantage que, partout ailleurs, c'est une pretention. STENDHAL.
>
> (Note in the interfoliated copy of *Le Rouge et le Noir,* May 24, 1834.)

> [*Trueness,* about the greatest as about the smallest things, seems to me almost impossible of attainment, at least a trueness *a little detailed.* Mme. de Tracy used to say to me: one can no longer attain trueness except in the novel. Each day I see more and more that, everywhere else, it is a pretension.]

How pretend to define the relations of autobiography to the novel, when such a definition would imply that so many perhaps insoluble

[1] A paper read at Pontigny Abbey on September 28, 1925.

problems have been solved? From which side should one attack the question with some chance of success? The novel is a very plastic style, too easily keeping the form it is given, and as for the ego, as for the author's personality, what must one picture behind such words, so recklessly employed yet so lacking in precision? When we try to conceive these mysterious relations, ideas escape from us and flee in all directions, but we feel nevertheless that they correspond to something real which it is urgent should be known if we wish to dissipate a discomfort which is now growing into an oppression. Now, more than ever, writers are duped by subjective phantoms carefully cultivated by a body of literary criticism several generations behind philosophic criticism. People familiarized with logical thought see being born again, incarnate and disturbing, the theories of an associationism and a sensualism which they might have thought long since surpassed. The problem of personality is set in terms no longer in circulation; but, as these terms are represented by the images of art and the emotions of life, they are served by the convincing force of impression and appear more alive than the

living ideas disclosing their inexactness. Now, the problem of the relations of the ego to the literary work is a function of the problem of the ego and of personality. We are therefore adventuring among shoals for which there is as yet no chart. Allow me to mention some of them before seeking with you a way through, perhaps narrow and small, but at least really navigable.

Forthwith, by admitting that it is possible to establish any *order* of correspondence between the ego and the work, one assumes, implicitly but certainly, that this ego, almost equally with this work, is a positive reality, something existing, to which one may attribute the origin of this or that accomplishment, which had a form, in the metaphysical sense of the word, *before* the literary form. I do not claim to condemn *a priori* the substantialist conceptions of the ego nor to contest that there are works which are good graphs of their author's mentality. I should like only to put you on guard against the prejudices which the realism of common sense and Christian discipline have accumulated around the problem before us. Christianity, do not let us forget it, needs individuals, without whom

its morality, and even its dogmas, must be reduced to powder. It must have them at any cost, and, as well as it can, it cuts them out of the stuff of life. And it must have them, note this well, *at the start,* so that our thought is composed hereditarily around individual monads constituting centres of attraction for the fancies, the instincts and the sentiments of which the waves pass through us: the soul is a coefficient the psychological values of which are affected by Christianity, which deeply modifies their relations, their proportions, and even their intimate reality.

Now, without here prejudging conclusions of an infinitely delicate analysis, it seems daring, as soon as one refuses to yield to the movement of habit, to relate to a *pre-existent* unity a set of states which seem to draw any cohesion only from the very act whereby they are attributed to an ego. Before this act, or this judgment, they are only currents and atmospheres, without delimitated zones, unless by making the body the criterion of the soul, one draws roughly, as it were by a material dotting, the spiritual being whose reality it is sought to affirm. But then, in the case concerning us, is

not this act whereby the ego is affirmed, the psychic states put together and imposed upon with a unity, precisely the work itself in which the sentiments are inscribed, the instincts liberated, and the fancies tested? Does not this ego, in so far as it is not a succession of moments passively lived, and as such belonging less to the body living them than to the universe which lends them to the body, does not this ego coincide with the work in so far as that work is affirmed as a unity, as an independent force of cohesion, in a word in so far as it is a *personality?* Thereupon, how can one establish a sort of ready-reckoner of the relations of the ego to the work if the ego can be known positively only in the work, if all comparison of one with the other, conceived as independent realities, is only literature and a vain play on words? I believe myself to be a convinced individualist,[2] but I refuse energetically to call individuality this heap of con-

[2] Elsewhere: *Une Étape: M. Paul Bourget* (*Nouvelle Revue Française*, August, 1926), Mr. Fernandez has defined what he means by an individualist: 'How do you define any notion, fatherland, the state, the family, honour, &c.? If by your feelings, affirm, act directly, and you are an individualist. If by science, take that long and tortuous road which will lead you who knows where. But if your intimate preferences make you reason upon causes, forcibly these causes, chosen arbitrarily, must be

fused tendencies over which the myth of the soul alone can give us the right of ownership.

Another shoal, perhaps even more dangerous: one is not content with thus setting face to face two realities exchanging their riches; by an insensible motion one goes on to recognize an analogical relation between the order and the proportion of values in one and the other. What is of high importance for the ego must necessarily occupy a no less important place in the work, and vice versa. One thus supposes demonstrated the two truths which precisely are in question, viz the substantial existence of an ego and the analogy between the ego and the work. Nothing entitles us to believe that the work's centre of gravity, so to speak, corresponds necessarily to the author's centre of gravity, *conceived, not as a writer, but as a man.* For it is quite evident that this distinction must be maintained under penalty of seeing our problem vanish. For an art such as painting, for example, I should not be disputed this point, because it is only in a very inferior degree of plastic culture that an importance of the first rank is attached to the

what determine the object. Such is the vicious circle into which you will have been brought by the mania for throwing over your feelings the domino of reason.'—*Translator's Note.*

subject. With literature it is otherwise owing to the inevitable confusion arising from the nature of the instruments of creation. Words and ideas, the senses and reflexes, serve equally for the building of a work and for the building of a man; agreed; but an experience, or a defect, or a quality, which in the life of a man plays an insignificant part, may become the kernel of a masterpiece, whereas this same man may fail to give an aesthetic form to the things closest to his heart. Is not Tolstoi denying his novels a great example? What would have become literarily of Manzoni's profound religiousness without the pure, implacable, and almost cynical, acuteness of his vision? And what would Balzac have drawn out of all his Napoleonic, mystical and scientific farrago had it not been for the two or three accidental and thoroughly material great emotions which rendered possible *Un Grand Homme de Province à Paris* and *César Birotteau*? The examples might be multiplied. I have purposely chosen cases in which the autobiographical origin of the work or the attitude is evident, though in very diverse forms, but it cannot be said that there is any correspondence between the essential interests of the work and the essential interests of

the man. And who would be able to measure the relations of Laclos of *Les Liaisons* to Laclos of the letters to his wife? Goethe alone, perhaps, might yield to a comparison of this kind; but Goethe, spontaneously and outside literature, was working on the construction of a personality for himself.

We reach here, in my opinion, a point of extreme importance. If one of the great principles of modern philosophy is true, if things *are* not but *become*, the ego cannot be related to the work in some way or other unless it has been made into a personality, even as different psychological and other elements have been made into a work. *There must be, on both sides, a tendency to independent syntheses.* Then only does it become legitimate to say that the work reflects or acknowledges such and such sentiments and such and such failures of the author's.

II

Is this to say that the question is insoluble? Such is not my opinion and we shall see in a moment that the sole example of Stendhal is enough to justify our interest in this problem. I should like

only to forearm myself against the temptation to establish definitions with ideas that have not been defined. I shall now leap from timidity to audacity by submitting to you some assumptions which I believe are suited to enlightening the debate, happy if their discussion is successful in opening up new views.

Let us sum up and complete the preceding remarks. We cannot start from the ego for the excellent reason that we do not know what it is. Christian monadism can only be a mirage in the actual state of our knowledge. It is not idle to note here that autobiographies properly so called suggest a conception of the ego which brings the latter much nearer nothingness than nearer being: the more their analyses are minute and true, the less do they succeed in seizing a real unity. Whether Amiel's vanishings, Constant's sublime obliterations, or Proust's intermittences, are being considered, it seems that as soon as a great mind seeks to capture immediately his ego instead of projecting its elements and unifying them in a work or in action, he exhausts himself in chasing a phantom which glides through the snares he sets for it. — But from another point of view it is evident that the entire

work comes out of the ego like Aphrodite from the sea. A few self-deceived naturalists alone have been able to pretend—and not for long—to an objective art, by means of a puerile artifice which consisted in suppressing the genesis and considering only the results. These were fancies which nobody now takes seriously. It is with his blood that an artist creates a work in which blood flows. It is with his sensations, his desires, his ideas, his logic, and his skill, that he constructs the world which he propounds to us; our individual life is the only one that we can give. Agreed. But once we have granted this, we do not see matters any the more clearly, for this amounts to saying that the work is created by the artist, a thing we have never doubted. Thus, on the one hand the problem appears to be too complicated, on the other too simple: from one angle insoluble, from another solved before being set and even conceived.

When a question presents this sort of difficulty, very likely the reason is that it is the arbitrary compression of several problems into one. And, indeed, I believe that it is possible to distinguish three modes of relations between the ego and the work connected with diverse and perhaps opposite

views. There is first the truism of the creative ego, a very vague and very general truth which here can be of no use to us. Then there is the idea, criticized above, of a comparison of two positive beings exchanging their values. On this principle depends a corollary which must for a moment retain our attention. According to this, artistic creation would be a means of personal knowledge, a discovery of self by oneself, which implies a certain conception of the work which does not appear to me confirmed by experience.

The literary work of art, a poem, play, or novel, is a synthesis obedient to specific laws of combination and development, absolutely distinct and different from the synthesis of our *human interests.* One of the most profound of contemporary critics, T. S. Eliot, thinks that 'the business of the poet is not to find new emotions, but to use the ordinary ones and, in working them up into poetry, to express feelings which are not in actual emotions at all,' that is to say, specifically aesthetic feelings. His conception of the part played by the author's personality is familiar: in the chemical phenomenon of catalysis the combination of two gases takes place only if a filament of platinum is present, but

the newly-formed acid contains no trace of platinum, and the metal itself is apparently unaffected. 'The mind of the poet,' Eliot continues, 'is the shred of platinum. It may partly or exclusively operate upon the experience of the man himself; but the more perfect the artist . . . , the more perfectly will the mind digest and transmute the passions which are its material.' Without altogether sharing these uncompromising views, I believe they contain great truths at present far too much misunderstood. In a general way, *it does seem that the feelings which undergo the aesthetic operation become through that very operation useless to him who transcribes them.* The most restricted experience reveals indeed that the psycho-aesthetic phenomenon is different, in nature, duration, and extension, from the same phenomenon as it is developed in an individual's consciousness. It has acquired a mobility, a generality, a power of contraction and abridgment, an independence in regard to time, and a greater dependence in regard to intelligence, whereby it is made into a sign rather analogous to the algebraic sign, whereby, at least, it is made to enter as an element into a combination which, when all is said, resembles

algebraic calculation far more than it resembles a mirror of personality. Paul Valéry said to me once that if the aesthetic necessities of a line had demanded it, Racine would have altered Phèdre's character. I think this judgment somewhat forced, but very worthy of attention. By going to the extreme one might imagine a pure artist who would register human experiences only in forms infinitely abridged and contracted yet pregnant with poetical developments. He might have, for example, the instantaneous feeling of an eternal love, a feeling which could not possibly be implanted in his duration and be fructified there otherwise than on the aesthetic plane, that is to say, in composition with elements altogether foreign to his ego. Or else, to vary the metaphors, let us say that the artist's experience is tangential to his experience as a man more often than it goes through his centre. The artist, according to this hypothesis, instead of acquiring knowledge about himself by creating, may be said rather to *renounce* those elements of his ego which he incorporates with the work. Possessing them just as much as knowing them.

This idea of the knowledge of self through

analysis, so fashionable nowadays, seems to me to be at least as pregnant with sophisms as with truths. There are, in fact, two ways of knowing oneself, viz to conceive oneself and to try oneself. To conceive oneself is to determine oneself, and I do not think that it is to play on words to add that it is to terminate oneself. The judgment which fixes one of our internal aspects must fall fatally into the alternative of excluding all possible modifications of this aspect or else of acknowledging all modifications as fast as they occur, and of concluding in the inexistence of the ego. This passive and altogether intellectual attitude of the mind receiving experiences as so many inevitable data, suggests the conception of an ego consisting of a collection of states which takes us back to the days of empiricism's popularity. The only real unity of the ego is not the mode of an immutable substance, but that movement, that internal tendency, which drives us to realize a state which, we consider, constitutes or reveals this unity. At bottom, the essential difference between the intellectual who, from a plurality of ego, concludes in nothingness, and the man who, starting from nothingness, seeks to endow himself with an ego, consists in that the

first proceeds by positive assertions and the second by negative assertions. The first says: 'I am this, that, and so on infinitely'; the second says: 'I am not yet this, that, etc.' This *not yet*, it is true, is enough to modify the bearing of a judgment, but it is still from a negation that the will to be is born. Now, guided by a sure instinct, the man who wants to be will never ask that an imaginative combination should reveal to him what he has become. He possesses a far too acute sense of reality to be content with such a compromise and he will carefully avoid such a tangent. And remark that art could not even reveal to him his possibilities, for the conditions of the possible are not the same in art as in life. Whereas the artist, on his side, thinks above all of doing his job and will be happier with a defect which 'fits' his technique than with a quality for which he cannot find expression. And the imitation of others will doubtless furnish him with more material than his own experience.

I do not seek in the least to establish hierarchical differences between the man, the artist, and the analyst. I deem all three indispensable to the progress of sane culture. It is further evident that in reality these distinctions are not so sharp: introspec-

tion is an admirable psychological discipline; aesthetic intuition sometimes reveals to us, in a general form, certain facts which we only vaguely discerned in ourselves; finally the supreme works are doubtless those (I am thinking of the *Divina Commedia*) in which the transposition and the aesthetic synthesis of a strong personality have been completely successful. But nowadays we confuse our tastes with our ideas, as introspection is fashionable we find introspective works interesting, and because they interest us, we confer upon them the honours of the novel which often they are far from deserving.

Perhaps we may now be allowed to draw a provisional scheme of the relations between the ego and the work, merely intended to clarify our ideas and to enable us to determine a third kind of relation which we have not yet mentioned. We have, then, on the one hand, gathered under the name of ego, the universal and anonymous states, forces, fancies, roughly delimitated by a body, by ready set-up social habits and influences, and on the other hand, among these states and forces, elements of volition, a tendency to self-knowledge, to constitute oneself, to self-knowledge through

constituting oneself, to an affirmation of oneness, to bring about that unity which does not exist at the start. Opposite this arbitrary ego which, in so far as the *personality-point*, so to speak, has not been attained, is an ego only by usurpation, three ways of expression and accomplishment open out: the way of passive analysis, the way of life or of personality, the way of artistic composition. Beyond doubt these ways cross and recross at several points, but if we rise to a sufficient height above them we see that their directions are divergent. In other words what is essential in each of the three attitudes indicated seems incompatible with the essential in the two others. Introspection takes the rough ego for its object and by a construction in depth, which composes the passive data of experience, is compelled to bring about the ideal unity of a contemplative consciousness. The psychology of personality, prospective and synthetic, can only seek in life, in the individual's action, the justification of a will to be which is confused no doubt with being proper. Finally artistic thought, conscious or unconscious, submits the elements of the ego it is given to a specific elaboration, one of the conditions of which is the absolute disinterestedness of the per-

sonality as such, and one of the consequences the radical transposition of the latter's values. Thus the ego is the warehouse of inclinations where we all come and get supplied, whatever our goal; but it is something on the hither side of being, a negative value. And to make clearer the point at stake, the work cannot contain positive revelations about an ego which attains the degree of being in that very work only, although the latter may be able to utilize certain elements of the ego in order to discover some truths touching on human nature.

What we are most often misled by are not the legitimate and fecund relations frequently established among the three modes of utilizing the ego, because these relations respect what is irreducible in each mode: what we are misled by are the fictive exchanges, the sleights of hand, which, taking advantage of the mental confusion of the majority of men, mark the cards and substitute illusion for reality. How many individuals do we not know who, introducing surreptitiously into the conduct of their lives, processes justified only by the laws of artistic combination, cultivate a compromise between the imaginary and the real, and offer to us, as personal actions revealing their internal unity,

acts which are only able but superficial imitations. How many writers, because they succeed technically in expressing certain feelings, later pick up these feelings for their own account and credit an illusory personality with them, even as those manufacturers who become patriots because they manufacture guns. How many people, to whom something has happened, compose for such an adventure a scenery which is to veritable art what stucco is to marble, or else draw out of this adventure infinite variations, interesting in themselves, but constituting a sort of psychology in two dimensions which in no way concerns life. All these more or less conscious card-sharpers, comedians or aesthetes, profiteers of beauty or self-exploiters, speculate on the confusion of minds, natural enough in such delicate matters, by suppressing all specific distinction between aesthetic feelings and living feelings, between art and reality.

## *The Example of Stendhal*

### III

Now that we have located the greater number of the snares in store for us, we may consider a third

way of relating the ego to the work without running the risk of forming illegitimate conclusions. This sort of relation is revealed to us in a particularly typical fashion when we study the intellectual development of Stendhal and the composition of his masterpiece, *Le Rouge et le Noir:* it appears to us as the only one permitting the establishment of a rational comparison of the ego with the work. But for the understanding of what is going to follow it is first necessary to note two or three points which I believe essential.

If we consider no longer the individuality of man, but the creative spirit, the philosophic significance of creation even as it may be discovered beneath the properly technical labour, we see that the work, whether play or novel, that is veritably a work, that is to say completely objectivated, not only satisfies a pure instinct of formal combination: it responds, quite on the contrary, to a deep spiritual need, of a metaphysical nature, viz the need of affirming the being, of setting down as one and absolute what can be seized in reality only in a fragmentary state, in a hypothetical and relative form. It is a great philosophic irony that the two essential focuses of spiritual life, the unity of the

person and the mechanism of action, remain almost completely closed to analysis. An irony all the more cruel as the balance and validity of any psychology is dependent on these focuses, that it is obligatory upon any psychology both to assume their existence and to behave as if they did not exist. Analysis retains the elements of the person *less* the unifying principle; it dissertates interminably upon action, whereas only from the atmosphere of action—which is far from being transparent to the mind—may adequate ideas on action germinate. A circumference everywhere, a centre nowhere, this is a metaphor perfectly suited to our conception of man; let us add that the division to infinity by more and more precise methods of the radii of the circumference results only in making the centre indefinitely more remote. — Is it not then natural that those to whom it is repugnant to follow either the altogether fragmentary ways of scientific psychology or the hard and disappointing work of the creation of self—that those who are vitally interested by the mystery of being should obtain satisfaction in artistic creation by starting immediately from what cannot be attained by the discursive road, by assuming absolutely the unity

of the person and by considering elucidated the mystery of action which becomes transparent—let us note it carefully—thanks precisely to the imaginative revolution which assumes it to be so? Imaginative and not imaginary, for dramatic creation possesses a specific positive value from the point of view of knowledge: it is certain, indeed, that the great works of the theatre and the novel could not contain such precious and precise revelations regarding man if this revolution had not installed the author's mind in the centre of the individual and at the heart of the action, that is to say if this mind had not overturned, in its audacious, unreflecting and genius-like effort to embrace being, the abstractly-assumed order of rational knowledge.

If these judgments are true, we may give an entirely acceptable interpretation of the relations of the ego to the work. In so far as the existence of the person and the value of its action concern man in the first degree, the creative artist renounces man since the unity of the person and the consciousness of the action are obtained in the work by the roundabout of an imaginative affirmation; but he does not renounce the elements of his ego, which,

since they assume a factitious unity of the person, *lose all personal significance and become simply the concrete material, the human stuff, so to speak, of creation.* Autobiography here no longer means 'biography of a person written by that same person,' but, *biography of an imaginary being composed with living elements borrowed from the nature and experience of the author.* The worthiness of this interpretation is evident: the elements of the author's ego become instruments of creation and constitute a concrete mode for expressing objective truths or realities analogous to those of science or religion; the writer's internal life, while retaining its original shades and its free movement, is an integrating part of the means of the work, far from the technique being as a disguise put on by the author.

Nobody, I believe, better understood and lived this transposition than Stendhal, as among other texts, the epigraph of this study bears witness. Remark the trueness 'a little detailed': this detail is the detail of the action obtained by an equation of the feelings and of their objective causes that can be correctly set only in the imagination. The immense and incalculable worthiness of the Stendhal-

ian work resides less in its intrinsic value than in the information which it yields to us regarding the respective characters of autobiography and the novel, regarding the vicissitudes of a mind who, with an admirable sense of specific values, contrived to carry to its conclusion an autobiographical work and a novel work without ever losing sight of their irreducible differences or ever mixing the two. More than that: his autobiographical work reveals to us the psychological, not to say physiological, reasons which turned Stendhal towards the novel, which incited him, not to the renunciation of the examination of his ego, but to seek his balance in imaginative affirmation, and utilize this ego for external ends. I believe that these reasons may enlighten the discussion.

The reading of *Henri Brulard*—a work in which memory naturally plays a much more important part than in the *Journal*—shows this memory to us obeying rather singular laws. The act of rememoration in Stendhal, and notably in this recital, appears subordinated to a mental drive—of which he is not the master and to which he is constrained to submit to the end—provoking a sudden call of recollections. These recollections consist of discon-

tinuous images, stars in the night of the past, presenting two remarkable characteristics: they very clearly have an affective basis, and on the other hand they are only very imperfectly associated—and often not at all—with the external facts which arouse them and with the psychological conditions of their apparition. 'I have nothing but very clear images, all my explanations come to me as I write this, forty-five years after the events.' 'I still see myself listening to him in the first room filled with people and immense in my eyes. But why these people? On what occasion? *That is what the image does not tell me. It is only an image*' (*Henri Brulard,* I., p. 60). 'I beseech the reader to remember that I have no pretension to veracity except in what touches my feelings; for facts I have always had little memory' (*ibid.*, p. 199). He stresses more strongly the quite subjective and affective character of his memory: 'I see a series of very clear images, but with no physiognomy other than that which they had in relation to me. Furthermore, *I see this physiognomy only through the recollection of the effect which it produced upon me.*' We see the particular nature of the 'effect,' the affective discharge freeing Stendhal from real-

ity instead of, as in the case of Proust, anchoring him in it. Hence the explanatory part of the recollections is hypothetical: 'But the reader . . . will see without difficulty that all my *becauses*, all my explanations, may be very faulty' (*ibid.*, p. 56).

These remarks help us to understand the Stendhalian mode of creation and development. Far from determining reality as in Balzac, of figuring the corridor through which it is necessary to pass to attain this reality, the system of causes is clearly relegated to the background. The criterion of reality is victorious here over the criterion of logical necessity. The web of the recital is composed of concrete images, of visions, of feelings, having no other condition of apparition than their very apparition, no other order than the affective reminiscence as the function of a certain mental movement. The essential, what being once given releases all the rest, is a scale of affective shades coming to life again in the order or disorder of life, bearing along with them series of divergent associations.

Does this mean that this opaque affective veil, isolating Stendhal from the external world, helps him the better to circumscribe his estates, to perceive and apprehend the unity of his ego? It is

rather the contrary that takes place: isolated from the external world, Stendhal is in a way isolated from himself by the almost purely subjective character of his recollections. 'But at bottom, dear reader, I do not know what I am: good, wicked, witty, foolish. What I do know perfectly is what things give me pain or pleasure, what things I want or hate' (*ibid.*, p. 314). The priority of tendencies over the qualifications is here evident. Stendhal never got beyond that state of primitive spontaneity which, while maintaining him in the most intimate contact with himself, never allowed him to seize and realize himself. But more than that. This being 'constantly moved,' who at fifteen, in spite of his strong sensations, was 'far more incapable than any other child of judging men,' has at moments a sort of *impersonal* memory of facts, the resuscitated emotion being then the only element of the memory which properly belongs to him. Thus, for example, he confuses his personal recollection of the descent of the St. Bernard with the recollection of an engraving representing this scene which he looked at some years later: '. . . and *my* recollection is *now no more than the engraving*' (*ibid.*, II., p. 189). Likewise, recalling the fort at

Bard, he confuses the impressions of reality with those of a recital made to him of the event (*ibid.*, p. 185). Recalling I no longer know what escapade of his childhood, he no longer knows if its hero was young Beyle or another lad. In short—and this appears to me of extreme importance—as soon as he seeks to get away from the affective zone, as soon as he ceases to make resound 'the sounds of his soul,' so as to incorporate himself with an objective reality, to constitute himself in accordance with a defined social circle, he fatally mixes up the imaginary and the real. Hence, in *Henri Brulard,* he compels himself carefully to isolate the *real* residua of his recollections, to purify them of any imaginative construction: 'At last, I went to the play; they were doing Cimarosa's *Matrimonio Segreto,* the actress playing Carolina had a tooth missing in front. That is all that remains to me of a divine delight. *I should lie and be novel-making if I undertook to detail it*' (*ibid.*, p. 192). If this quotation is placed beside our epigraph, it will be agreed here we have reached the point at which autobiography is very near turning into the novel. The zone of the past in which the real recollections lie is very narrow. Beyle never remained in it very

long, even in the day-by-day notations of his journals: is not the Italian Journal already for a great part a compromise between memory and imagination?

Most remarkable of all is that reflective analysis does not put Stendhal in possession of himself any more than affective rememoration does. The passage from one to the other is indicated in those very typical pages of *Henri Brulard* in which Beyle speaks to us of his amorous effusions in Milan. As if dazzled by the intensity of his happiness then and by the violence of the emotions which the recollection of this happiness rekindles, he finds himself absolutely incapable of expressing it, of communicating it to us, and he is reduced to analyzing this phenomenon which thus becomes abstract, general, and ideological, through the very excess of the affective discharge. He is so well aware of this that he admits it in a striking formula which sums him up entirely: 'All these are discoveries which I make as I write. *Not knowing how to paint, I am analyzing what I felt then.*' Let us pick out also in this remark the revelation of his process of discovery, to which he returns very often in his writings: 'M. Daru who at bottom had

no wit [but I guess that in great secrecy only as I write this]' (p. 121). 'The errors of the one [the man] of 1800 are discoveries which I make for the most part as I write this' (p. 139). And this even more striking example: 'I believe I discover as I write that Cardon wore it [that charming uniform]' (p. 141). This means that the writing, the graph of this internal movement, of this mental drive of which we have spoken, puts him in a fit state to make him understand the linking of his feelings, the sense of facts, and sometimes these facts themselves. 'I have felt strongly all my life, but I only see why long afterwards,' no doubt, but let us be very careful—for we are reaching here the heart of the problem—*that this method of discovery after the deed by writing has the effect of modifying the validity of the explanation and the nature of the facts, the former surpassing the individual in order to acquire a general bearing, the latter being as it were masked and deformed by the pressure of thought.* Bearing on a small number of ideas, Stendhal's reflection becomes creative: 'There is one of the great defects of my head: I ruminate without surcease about all that interests me; through going on looking at it in different

*soul-positions,* I end by seeing something new in it, *and I make its aspect change*' (p. 18). Beside this text one may place this other remarkable one: 'As I have deepened the same ideas since, how am I to know where I was then? The well was ten feet deep, each year I added five feet; now one hundred and ninety feet down, how can I have the image of what it was in February 1800, when it was only ten feet deep?' Thus, when he wants to seize and understand himself, Stendhal collides with the triple deformative resistance of time, affectivity, and ideological generalization. He does take certain views of his ego, but that ego proves to be reduced to affective schemes, either engaged in a general consideration emanating from him but surpassing him, or else completed and deformed by imagination, or finally, composed of all these heterogeneous elements.

Affective categories, ideological categories, flying images carried along in the storm of passions, hypothetical or phantasmal character of the object, incomplete ego, often formless, vanishing in emotions or being crystallized in ideas, the point of consciousness and knowledge situated well beyond the present and the action, in the movement

of a writing which fixes the formless stumps of personality or else links them together and completes them with imagination, a memory retaining only the affective counter-stroke of experience and rendering the latter interchangeable with others: do not these traits reveal to us a figure and spiritual means susceptible of being utilized more effectively in art than in life, a potential personality which will be realized only in the act of the work, that is to say a personality available essentially for non-personal ends? Let us add that Stendhal's Journals, in which he possesses himself each day in order to lose himself the next day, show him interested by the tactics of life in so far as his spontaneous conduct reveals to him his clumsiness, his incurable staircase psychology. This brilliant and rapid man, who perceives everything in an instant, cannot succeed in adjusting his actions to his intentions much better than Rousseau, although he does reveal himself infinitely more honest than Rousseau about what he sees. In his Journals Stendhal seeks to construct himself, in *La Vie de Henri Brulard* he seeks to know himself, but all his autobiographical writings might carry as an epigraph the first page of

the *Souvenirs d'Egotisme*, where he sees that of himself he knows approximately nothing.

## IV

I am now going to attempt to sketch the rough outline of the method of Stendhalian creation by utilizing the revelations of his autobiographical work. For the novel side I shall allude only to *Le Rouge et le Noir*. This novel—for reasons which this is not the place to exhibit—appears to me of a superior aesthetic nature to that of Stendhal's other novels, except perhaps *Lucien Lewen*. Besides, you all have present in your memory the essential features of this great book, and that will spare us unnecessary quotations.

The special charm of Stendhal's superiority comes from a something, I know not what, unexpected and accidental, which always accompanies its evidences. It is the crush of professors barely weaned from books, both disconcerted and ravished by the absence of all proof, of all demonstration, by this miraculous flowering, without roots and without tutors. A great writer ordinarily bears with him certificates of his superiority: a literary

technique, an objective logic, singular qualities of vision or style, principles firmly established: they constitute his spiritual sign analogous to the shopkeeper's sign. Stendhal allows himself to be guaranteed by nothing of the sort. His creations are brought off against a perfectly neutral and as it were inexistent background, as mysterious for us as was for him, when he came to mathematics at Grenoble, a positive sum of negative numbers. He ceases at every line to be mediocre without its being possible to say why or how. Always with steam up even when he is not advancing, he is unrivalled in the art of obtaining the reader's credit, although he does not obtain this credit with title-deeds, but by the mere magnetism of a vital movement without precise contours. It seems that Stendhal must have wanted to purify his work of all artifice and even of all definable art, in order to make stand out the essential traits of a deeper art, more intimately fused in the very life of the mind; so that those who, like Mr. Victor Giraud, cannot perceive either this fusion or the subtle rhythm of this life, discover nothing in Stendhal which is not spotted with mediocrity and vain pretension. On another side, his admirers especially stress his intellectual supe-

riority, his rationalism, and his 'algebraism,' as if the analytical framework of the work ensured its balance and solidity.

I believe that we shall take a different view of the Stendhalian novel if we care to go back to the preceding considerations. Beyle's autobiographical notes have revealed him to us on the horns of a dilemma: on the one hand, his personal experience, and consequently his being, tend to be reduced to pure affectivity, on the other hand, the excess of this affectivity turns him fatally aside towards ideology: between the emotion and the idea which both depersonalize him, how can he succeed in affirming the being, the unity and reality of which interest him still more—let us make no mistake—than ideological discovery? Let us notice at once that this affirmation of the being is not necessarily identified by Stendhal with an affirmation of the ego. As early as his adolescence he pursued, parallelly and with an equal good faith, his attempts at being a man and his attempts at being an artist. But this dilemma comprises for him an aesthetic translation, as this remark in his Journal testifies: 'Brissot makes me think that the qualities of the philosopher, that is to say of him

who seeks to know the passions, and of the poet or him who seeks to paint them to produce a certain effect, are incompatible.' Now Stendhal is thrown into analysis by excess of emotion; is emotion, therefore, an obstacle for him in the painting of emotion? Here he is, believing that he has found shortly afterwards a suitable solution: 'There is a way of moving which is to show the *facts*, the *things*, without telling of the effect.' This note sets going what one might call a theory of indirect or objective lyricism as it was cultivated in the second half of the nineteenth century, notably by Ibsen, and formulated recently by T. S. Eliot in his analysis of the objective correlative of emotion. The relation of emotion to the 'facts' should be thus conceived: *the latter express emotion not directly and as a mirror reflects an object, but in so far as their mode of apparition and articulation to one another is determined by it.* Now we have seen that Stendhal's memory remembers badly, or does not remember at all, the facts determining emotion in real experience: to affirm the being, to establish a synthesis, not primarily ideological, but living and concrete, of the subject and the object, Beyle is thus led to operate an imaginative conversion,

to bring it about that his emotion re-creates facts. Here the *coup d'état* forces itself, and it is a radical one.

I do not need to remind you that *Le Rouge et le Noir* is composed upon an affective web, that emotion is its kernel and principle of development, whether it is a question of the encounter of Julien and Mme. de Rênal, of the evening in the garden when Julien takes the latter's hand, of the arrival of the young peasant at the seminary, of his amorous vicissitudes with Mathilde, or of the attempted murder in the church. *Now, all these scenes have this that is remarkable about them, that emotion is not expressed in them, at least formally,* but represented as by a graph, by notations of facts of which the choice and order of succession are determined by the emotion itself. It is enough to say that this graph is neither an analysis nor an abstract construction, still less a putting-together of documents in the manner of the naturalists. What is the nature of the emotion and what is its place in the work? The subject of it is usually an individual in full activity, coming to the action furnished with certain ideas which are immediately modified by this action. It further presents two characters of

the first importance, which indeed complete each other. In so far as the articulation of facts with one another is concerned, as it is produced by the movement of the action and its affective counter-strokes, no conducting wire makes it possible to compose it from the outside. The novel is formed by a set of synthetic moments of absolute psychic states engendering one another, *and this continuous creation can be regulated only by the writer's duration, by the association of his internal states.* And as for the analysis, *that is posterior to the dramatic synthesis, the discovery being born of the movement of the writing which re-creates in its detail the movement of life.*

The composition of the Stendhal novel is identical with the internal composition of a mental and sensible life in the atmosphere of action, but, on the one hand, having become transparent to analysis and as it were intellectually erected, and on the other hand, lending its psychic mechanism to various characters, to various types of *dramatis personae.* We have seen that the Stendhalian heroes go into action furnished with certain ideas, which are part of their characters as these are conceived by the author. In the early years of the century Beyle had

devoted himself to a deep study of comic psychology, that is to say of the art of making definite characters live. That he acquired in this a great mastery is something which Sorel, Mme. de Rênal, Mathilde, M. de la Mole, do not allow us to doubt. But what should especially interest us here is the way in which these ideas, these analytic schemes, are set going upon the duration of Beyle, who carries them along, makes them tractable, and transforms them. Gifted for physical imitation, and anxious to conceive what he calls the *extent* of a character —that is to say, the zone of his possible acts— Stendhal, thanks to the plasticity and the impersonality of his ego, immediately accords his conception to the rhythm of his internal life. But this rhythm, even as the concrete modalities of his duration, modify in turn the conception: the detail of the action, rendered conscious by the aesthetic symbolism, reveals traits which the original analysis could not have seized and which suggest fresh analyses. Stendhal's characters escape incessantly from their definitions because they go and seek in the heart of the action the secret of fresh definitions; but these discoveries are rendered possible only because the author lets himself live

freely within the objective limits of a unity incessantly destroyed and incessantly re-formed by the very affirmation of life.

Stendhal discovers in imaginative conversation, disciplined by analysis, the means of an affirmation and a consciousness of the being which his personal experience did not afford to him or afforded incompletely. It is not only 'a trueness a little detailed' that he demands from fiction: he wants something more urgent, more essential perhaps than truth, the sentiment of a life which is ordering and knowing itself, of a world in which personalities are affirmed by enduring and are confirmed by conflicts which oppose them to one another, of a world in which is revealed the secret and ever-threatened harmony of life and reason. But for this he has to consent to this world's borrowing from him its spontaneous modes of conception and development, he has to consent to become the form of a living matter which belongs to him no longer from the very instant in which he defines it. One may certainly say that he possesses himself in losing himself, but it is thanks to this alienation of self that he inscribes his work in an indefinable order which defies all factitious objectivism and all rudimentary con-

ceptualism; thanks to it also, the being which defines itself in his consciousness he first felt come to birth in the most intimate part of his ego.

## V

It is difficult for me, I admit, to draw a universal conclusion from a particular experience however typical. At most does Stendhal's example enable us to get a glimpse of the mechanism of creation in the great animators of fictive beings, more in conformity, we may believe, with the Stendhalian mode than with, for example, the Balzacian mode, but the relations of the autobiographical part and the novel part of Beyle's work make of the latter a privileged case for the problem concerning us, a case whence we may draw a few solid principles proper for our guidance in our ulterior researches.

1. First we must relegate to the background, as being of minimum importance and yet susceptible of misleading us, all notes and remarks having assumed the form of an objective biography. The fact that this or that novelist of love loved this or that lady in a certain fashion teaches us exactly nothing from the aesthetic point of view. The ex-

perience of love and the painting of love represent two developments, two orientations, and as it were two different colorations, of the inner life of this novelist without its being possible to establish between them the least positive correspondence. Apart from our reconstructing the personal love nine times out of ten with the elements of the fictive love, we have not even the right to rely on the revelations of a correspondence or of a journal, which may have been written under the influence of the work or of the ideal integrated by this work, which are in any case themselves the result of an *a posteriori* construction. A still greater distrust must be observed in regard to the gossipings of opinion, even if it be the opinion of the writer's intimates, for we know that the man disguises himself as often before his friends as before the public, though for different reasons. We must also neglect biographical anecdotes—such as Julien Sorel's spelling mistake—which do not appear in the work until the latter is already essentially constituted and therefore have nothing necessary about them.

2. If we must take care not to set out from an *objective* conception of the life of the writer, this is in order not to let go the prey for the shadow

by substituting an often misleading arbitrary image for the tendencies and impulsions which alone may enlighten us; tendencies and impulsions of which the synthetic unity is inexistent originally, in what is vulgarly called the ego, but is formed at the same time as the aesthetic synthesis with which it makes one. Then our analysis, to be indeed rational, must be submitted to the organic rules of the work in question. It is therefore necessary to consider this work not as a more or less successful psychological disguise—except to see in it the sign of a work that has failed—but as a spiritual affirmation, an effort to unify and think life according to certain determined concrete modes. This is why it seems useless to dally with the imaginative after-touches which the author may, willingly or otherwise, have added to his own portrait: for in addition to the portrait being itself no doubt for a great part imaginary, the inventions of the creative mind may have a more general bearing, that is to say contain more truth, than the empirical description of the ego. This principle would not be surprising if it were formulated in connection with a discipline such as mathematics for example, in which by the objectivity of the rules a line of rigorous demarca-

tion is drawn between the ego and the work, of the man of science: now, there is more resemblance than is believed between the diverse manifestations of the mind, and if modern logicians stress the share of creative invention in mathematical demonstration, aestheticians, on their side, insist on the specific character, irreducible to psychologism, of the combinations of art.

3. Nevertheless, as dramatic literary art uses signs which evoke the familiar representations of human life, it may be worth while attempting to establish a correspondence between the work and the ego, but the critic must then be twice as prudent. All thought, however abstract, is a movement, an intellectualized action; still more so must concrete dramatic thought be the spiritualization of acts similar to those constituting the conduct of a life or the being of a personality. But, just so, there are very few chances that a same line of action will be as it were drawn in duplicate, even if one were considered as the negative of the other. For remark that the artist cannot speak of his 'unsatisfied aspirations' except in so far as he relates these to what he imagines of his being, of his personality: discovering a void there where he expected

to find a solid, he is terrified by his nothingness, when perhaps these aspirations are nothing but *technical aspirations,* so to speak. Let a man be animated by certain tendencies which cannot be realized and ordered except in the severe rationality of mathematics; imagine this man, still hanging back in the neutral zone of the ego and unconscious of the veritable end of his tendencies, seeking to satisfy them in an order incompatible to them, social life for example, or the conduct of private life: if he is sensitive, he will suffer the same anguish as our artist and for the same reasons. The great metaphysical void of existence is often only the lack of an appropriate technique. A consequence of the romantic revolution is this intervention upon any pretext and no pretext of the phantom of personality, the vague silhouette of which is evoked only in order that its vanishing may be forthwith deplored. All that may be said is that the author carries into his work the active and ideal tendencies which he fails to be able to invest in life.

4. In so far, and in so far only, as it is permissible for us to utilize the example of Stendhal, it may be concluded that certain men find in artistic logic more favourable conditions than in their lives

for this affirmation and this consciousness of the being towards which all our efforts tend. In that way the work possesses a metaphysical value, reveals to us, when we know suitably how to question it, the inclinations and the postulates of the mind. But on the other hand this example reminds us that all work of the front rank must present the essential forms of an individual life lived from the inside, as much in its affective web as in its concrete modes of articulation. And it is in this manner only that it is legitimate to conceive the immanence to the work of the ego.

# IV

# THE ART OF CONRAD

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THERE reigns throughout the work of Conrad a great silence of the reason, an audacious and grave contempt for logical or oratorical persuasion. It was with a keen consciousness of his abilities that he declared that in a novel, as in any work of art, the appeal of one temperament to other temperaments 'must be an impression conveyed through the senses,' since the task is to fix 'passing events' by re-creating 'the moral, the emotional atmosphere of the place and time.'[1] He has kept his promise. Few writers have so loyally and so continuously allowed sensible reality to do the speaking, interrupting it only rarely and with an infinite cautiousness, and remaining under the immediate influence of its mystery. From one end to the other of a patient work he persists, not without pain but nearly always happily, in overwhelming

[1] Preface to *The Nigger of the Narcissus* (p. xiii of the Doubleday, Page edition).

us with sensations, in saturating us with colours, sounds, human voices, contacts, visions, atmospheres, in leaving us all vibrant with the thousand effluences of a world which comprehends us rather than that we comprehend. And few writers have more knowingly shielded their universe from the enterprise of the intelligence. It is through this science of mystery (which has nothing in common with the rather scenic effects of Stevenson's) that Conrad is distinguished from his Slav brethren. For them the world is in fact incomprehensible and sometimes in spite of themselves; in Conrad on the contrary the observer's precise intelligence is composed with the actor's emotion, but this intelligence, instead of transposing the experience, evokes, through the creation of the atmospheric image, the obscure birth of the event. A thinking mastery of the unthinkable—such is the impression with which we are left by his best books.

This elaborated impressionism is carried by Conrad to a point of perfection all the more remarkable that he most often evokes frenzied actions or indefinable sensations. He has the benefit of neither the remoteness of a writer like Pater nor the slowing-down of one like Proust; to all the

impressions communicated must be added an impression of rapidity, of suddenness, of start, the jolting and confused motion of dreaming. Read or read again his scenes of storm: it seems that he who has been able, not only to evoke, but to mature and compose with imagery the most subtle shades of these catastrophic experiences, has been identical with him who created them; and this creative passivity has truly something about it of the divine. An impressionism furthermore altogether subjective. Conrad's vision is elaborated to the affective point at which perceptions come and form the unity of a moment of our internal life. '. . . In the still streak of very bright pale orange light I saw the land profiled and seeming to float on the water as light as cork.' [2] All physical effects are met with in these images, but at their point of arrival and fusion into impression. 'The smiling greatness of the sea dwarfed the extent of time. The days raced after one another, brilliant and quick like the flashes of a lighthouse, and the nights, eventful and short, resembled fleeting dreams.' [3] Here the impression is related to a period; it is not a recital, but

[2] *The Shadow Line*, p. 131 (Dent).
[3] *The Nigger of the Narcissus*, Uniform Edition, p. 30.

indeed *a personal memory* that we are given in these pages. Such an art might be compared to a graphic projection. Even as these little greyish hachures necessarily represent a mountain, so such and such of Conrad's images contain inevitably in their immaterial substance a whole ship struggling in the wind throughout a starless night. There is a strict equivalence, the projection on the affective plane respecting the precise relations of reality.

Conrad's art is therefore the contrary of descriptive art, notably that of Balzac; he does not make a tracing of reality on top of the man but of the man on top of reality; he evokes subjectively integral experiences because the impression is equivalent to the perception's totality and because the man suffers it altogether and with all his strength. His great originality is to have applied this impressionism to the knowledge of human beings. 'You know,' says Marlow, 'that I saw him only on that one occasion I told you of. But it may be that a glimpse and no more is the proper way of seeing an individuality.'[4] Marlow no doubt goes in for irony, but compare his sally with this judgment of Sir Hugh Clifford's: 'Sir Frank Swet-

[4] *Chance*, p. 68 (Methuen).

tenham and I were agreed that its [*Almayer's Folly's*] author's pictures of Malays were the result, as it were, of a series of flash-light impressions absorbed by a mind of strangely sensitive and imaginative quality, rather than of any deep understanding of the people we both knew so well.'[5] This does not prevent Sir Hugh from exclaiming: 'A miracle!' and we with him, when we see these 'flash-light impressions' achieve the sculpturing of the sombre and palpitating statue of Lord Jim. We indeed reach there a natural bent of Conrad's genius: to get a glimpse of a thing is the proper way of seeing it, because it is the proper way of preserving the human as it were embalmed in our impression while respecting the living impenetrability. The human effluences are collected by Conrad in the same manner as, and equally with, the material effluences, below the region of concepts, and in a state of affective grace.

It is in the same spirit of faithfulness and of yielding to life that Conrad fashions this sumptuous emotive cloth. He is not content with replacing the recital with the immediate evocation of sensible

[5] *Joseph Conrad: Some Scattered Memories*, by Sir Hugh Clifford (*The Bookman's Journal*, October, 1924).

reality: he applies himself to seizing things at their birth, in their formation, and, so to speak, on the hither side of their definition. I mean that we undergo them before they can be defined, given a name. '. . . I became bothered by curious, irregular sounds of faint tapping on the deck. They could be heard single, in pairs, in groups. While I wondered at this mysterious devilry, I received a slight blow under the left eye and felt an enormous tear run down my cheek. Raindrops. Enormous. Forerunners of something. Tap. Tap. Tap. . . .'[6] This is a *co-nascence* agreeing with the definition that Claudel has given of the word. An image of the event is communicated to us possessing the qualities of recollection, of a personal, affective recollection, since rememoration's unique medium is the shades of the impression *before* the latter's elucidation by comparison and reasoning. Conrad applies the same process to men. It may be said that his characters become sensible, are projected on our body, react upon our soul, then go and move, problematic and alive, in our imagination. There is nothing artificial about their mystery, it being simply the effect of the incom-

[6] *The Shadow Line*, p. 194.

mensurability with thought of what is immediately seized by the senses. There are two sorts of mysteries: that of things which are ably hidden from us, and that of things which we are made completely to feel. The first arises from an intellectual combination, the second from a reverse of the natural advance of the mind and of our immersion in the life which we were soaring over. This great silence around Conrad's characters is nothing less than the complement of their truth.

Those who have only read of his *Chance* or *Nostromo,* or even *Lord Jim,* will have difficulty in giving their approval to these remarks. There is indeed a lot of talking in certain of Conrad's books wherein Marlow desperately comments upon the acts of his fellows. The fact is, Conrad has two manners which are very different, though related by common characteristics. The majority of his properly sea stories (*The Nigger of the Narcissus, The Shadow Line, Typhoon,* &c.) directly evoke the collective adventure of a ship by a chain of perceptions whereby a real dramatic state, a hallucinating and oppressive *present,* is composed. These adventures, through the demeanour and as it were the stream of the action, through the pres-

sure of the atmosphere and the violence of the nervous discharge, recall the Greek tragedies. Their dominant note is an extremely painful physical tension around which moral reactions are determined. Limit-trials of human resistance, they are remarkable for the total absence of space, of play: the men are overwhelmed by the brutal mass of the event. The best of them, at their best moments, are like rages of sensibility which make the human machine revolve at an abnormal rate. It is in these moments, when it seems indeed that man must be annihilated by his very resistance, that what is most purely human in him is revealed with the greatest splendour. But each one exists only as a function of his companion; all the existences are as it were imbricated upon one another, and the dramatic present is formed by their conjugated presences. The second manner, illustrated each in their way by *Lord Jim* and *Chance,* corresponds to the periods of holiday and relaxation. Then all is rest, meditation, nonchalance. The narrator, in possession of himself, recollects less about himself than about others. Evocation is at the second power, slowly and minutely it transforms the past into the present. The order of time

is so little respected that one often begins with the story's future. Finally speech, intelligent speech, reassumes its rights, replaces the interjections and the brief orders. One must mention the combination of recollections and the particular nature of the psychological commentary in these stories.

Conrad lets several witnesses do the telling and they toss and retoss the recital to each other. Of the same story he supplies different colourations, the shades, the observations, the depth of the psychological interpretation, varying according to the witness. Let us add that each of these testimonies is commented upon by the narrator-in-chief, Marlow as it happens. Thus reality seems to be composed of related pieces sewn together rather more or less by the author, but what art is concealed under this apparent disorder! Conrad indeed arranges the different views of the same experience so as to produce an effect of juxtaposition in transparence. In presenting a series of composed reflections of life, he obtains a stereoscopic relief. In conformity with the process which we have indicated, the least episode, nay, the least incident, evokes a memory which becomes contemporaneous,

substituting a new present for the previous one. All these presents which summon each other, succeed one another, criss-cross, give an impression of twinkling which may tire and mislead the reader. The artistic result is none the less remarkable; about the middle of the book this personal memory of which we were speaking above is constituted, the reader has *felt* the characters through a continuity of unexpected sensible shocks, as in life.

As for the psychological commentary, that is presented to us as merely *probable. This is to say that it is not allowed to intervene at all in the determination of the character.* A mere chain of suppositions, of hypotheses, it remains tangential to reality; whence it ensues that the opacity of the individual, of the scene, is never completely dissipated—at least directly—since the analysis presses upon as much as it can without dissolving, this breadth of mystery, the refuge of life. The slight uncertainty causes it to be deviated incessantly, the event is both understood and impenetrable.[7] From another point of view, the quite relative character

[7] One should also note the process which consists of imagining the scenes which the narrator has not witnessed. By thus putting into the foreground the technical means which the novelist leaves in the wings, Conrad gives to his recitals an exquisite savour of dreaming and probity.

of the commentary makes the weight of the recital bear on sensible intuition. We await from the scene the impressions which it will bring to birth in us, the enlightenment of the story, the verification of the hypotheses, which has the result of concentrating our attention to the uttermost.[8]

Conrad's world assumes a presence, that of a subject upon the body of whom this world is unrolled and reflected. His personalities themselves are drawn in hollow by their reflection upon the witnesses. This co-nascence implies an absolute, and in a way a metaphysical, passivity. However—and this is how, in my opinion, Conrad is to be distinguished from the other impressionists and how he is very much their superior—this observer brings and defends something preciously personal in his confrontation with the inhuman forces of the universe. This precious deposit comprises man's aspirations before trial and his desire to continue to retain his integrity and be worthy of trust in the course of such a trial. To doubt *one's ability to conduct one's life*[9] is for Conrad the most lugubrious of weaknesses. 'Wherever he stands,' he

[8] See notably the admirable scene of the attempt at poisoning in *Chance*.
[9] *The Duel (A Set of Six)*.

writes elsewhere, 'at the beginning or the end of things, a man has to sacrifice his gods to his passions or his passions to his gods. That is the problem, great enough, in all truth, if approached in the spirit of sincerity and knowledge.' [10] But the nature of Conrad's experience has given a singularly striking form to this eternal struggle. The sailor's will, often incommensurable with events, is manifested by the concentration of his strength rather than by its expansion. The captain, Conrad's admirable master, does not so much impose himself as 'hold,' and he holds on like grim death, and his resistance modifies the world of elements and men. He holds on, he is *present,* and after the typhoon his 'I have lived' must mean 'I have been a man.' A resistance which has its counterpart in the facility with which the strong man in Conrad confides in other men, undergoes their contagion, in that virtuous complicity everywhere sensible in *Lord Jim* and of which *The Secret Sharer* furnishes us with the finest expression. Perhaps we shall never encounter again, in the novel and in the drama, the marvellous harmony of this double loyalism, a loyalism towards life as it is, a loyalism towards man as

[10] *Notes on Life and Letters* (Dent), p. 20 (the essay on *Henry James*).

he would be, the fruit of a genius, a character, and an experience, equally exceptional. No supreme art, however, without that harmony.[11] In reading Conrad, I often think of a celebrated phrase of Henri Poincaré's which he invites us to make useful and to enrich with an access of humanity: man is only a feeble gleam in the storm, but this gleam resists and this gleam is all.

[11] In this brief analysis of Conrad's art I have thought it opportune to pass over in silence the criticisms which might be made of him. Flaubert did not always have on him the best influence. His sentences are often too overwritten, and the inevitable *and* which precedes the last proposition renders them rather monotonous. Sometimes also this magnificent evocator of emotions falls into descriptive art. But the vision evoked is ordinarily independent of the phrase, which is not importunate for us except when inspiration weakens. Finally, however fine a novel like *Nostromo* may be, it seems to me to have an artificial and rather painful deportment. I would say as much of the first part of *Chance,* so splendid and so successful in other respects. I would willingly subscribe to this judgment of *The Times Literary Supplement:* 'He never believed in his later and more highly sophisticated characters as he had believed in his early sea men.'

# V

# THE MESSAGE OF MEREDITH

# V

# THE MESSAGE OF MEREDITH

> There seems to be a measurement of distances required before men and women have a chance with their brains.
>
> GEORGE MEREDITH.

## I

I SHOULD like in these pages devoted to the beneficent genius of Meredith to define his originality and measure the importance of his *message* for our culture. Mr. Trevelyan, the exact and wise commentator of the Box Hill master, declares that reading Meredith sustained him in the dark hours of the War. Since the present peace is only after all a watered war, is this not the time to set about knowing the writer who, thanks to his exceptional organization, had the privilege, alone among all his fellows, of bequeathing to us the magnificent heritage of hope? And I will note forthwith, for the sake of greater clearness, the essential points whereby he is to be distinguished from his peers, the great creators of the last century.

What first strike one in Meredith are his optimism and his faith, an optimism and a faith *born of the very circumstances which made pessimism and doubt germinate in the minds of his contemporaries.* I mean that Meredith's optimism, and his faith in the human future, were the consequences of his intuition of the dramatic problems of our period, of his acute sympathy for the disturbances and dislocations of our soul. Add to this that his excessive sensibility and his mind's extreme complexity predisposed him—as we shall see presently—to a morbid interpretation of life which would have far exceeded in depth and intensity the conclusions of Ibsen or Hardy. This optimism, therefore, expresses a vital triumph, a victory by Meredith over a part of himself, the happy issue of a kind of moral phagocytosis. This is a case of something brought off, a transformation into reality—the infinitely rich and complex reality of an exceptional individual—of what was before him only one of the least possible of possibles: the *effective* defeat of romanticism, the conquest of normality, of balance, and indeed of wisdom. Meredith's optimism is both objective and personal. He expresses the resistance of a man gifted with an exceptional moral muscula-

ture, *but who is not deceived by his sensibility,* who sees and feels the realities which in others less strong than he secrete pain.

Only Meredith's experience undergoes no abstract deformation. His work is the direct though poetical transcription of a life lived and meditated outside all speculative or aesthetic consideration. The stating of life *in problems,* an instinctive operation for a man like Butler, was as completely unknown to Meredith as the theory of infinite number. In his work there is no abstract plan according to which the motives of his characters' acts are linked to some general theory conceived outside them or before them, according to which there would be dissimulated under a philosophic veil a sentimental prepossession analogous to that generating the creatures of Dickens and Hardy. In Meredith thought is not separable from intuition: for him thinking consists in following through the intelligence the flow of a duration other than his own. His philosophy, devoid of all *a priori* conception and of all abstract articulation, is immediately verifiable by each one of us within the modest frames of our daily experience.

No less exceptional than his optimism—though

more remarkable considering the subtle goings-on of his thought—is his sense of *living unity* in all its forms. Whether studying an individual's internal life, or each of his sentiments or acts separately, Meredith's intelligence analyzes without dissociating: it is always arrested at a centre of resistance constituted by the unity of the sentiment, of the act, or of life. His analysis consists in determining the psychic unity of his characters at any moment and in explaining their acts by this unity, whence it follows that their soul-states are never detached from themselves in order to be laid out on the anatomical board: they are enclosed within the imponderable and insuperable limits of their personalities. In this way is Meredith's genius opposed trait for trait to that of Marcel Proust. He had the intuition of a living being, distinct from the visual, motor, and ideal representations which later served for *representing* it. From the junction of Diana's duration and his own duration, Meredith drew the certain knowledge of an individuality different from his, yet, like his, definite. Diana breathed in him: he was certain of her reality and certain of her limits, which he could no more surpass than he would have been able to surpass the limits of his

own force or of his own vision. He is the opposite of Balzac, whose characters are not clearly distinguished from the class to which they belong and from the ideas which serve to demonstrate them; of Marcel Proust, who composed his with recollections even as our grandmothers covered cushions with strips of hangings. This is because he does not start from the observation of a class nor from ideas nor from the embroidery of recollections: Diana, Feverel, Beauchamp, Carinthia Jane, come to life in him all at once, fully created, with all their possibles and all their impossibles, the products of an inner chemistry of which he is aware without deliberately working at it. In spite of the formidable intellectual pressure to which he thereafter submits them, Meredith's characters always retain the fragrance of natural creatures, independent of the intellect, one might almost say vegetable. The fanatical analyst who carries us along from consciousness to consciousness gives us the impression of taking us for a walk in a forest.

Now, this sense of living synthesis, this privilege enjoyed by each of Meredith's characters of being distinguishable from all others by its first cry, by the first act it accomplishes, this mysterious power

of his to affirm immediately the indivisible unity of his personality, of setting his forces of resistance against the dissolving forces of analysis, all such qualities are properly dramatic. They form the distinctive traits of the genius of Sophocles, Shakespeare, and Dostoievsky. In Meredith the *point of consciousness* was the relation of individuals' characters to their acts, *and his analysis consisted in his becoming conscious of his dramatic intuition of beings.* He invented—or rather first utilized with profundity—a new method of psychological investigation and literary expression: the method of *dramatic analysis,* thus conciliating two tendencies which by romanticism had been set up in opposition to each other.[1]

Measure the consequences: on the one hand, a strong intellectual tension and infinite possibilities of analysis; on the other, equally infinite possibilities of *resistance* in the individuals analyzed;—so that human personality, in Meredith's work, is not made to pay to analysis that tribute which roman-

[1] It is of course understood that I mean by *dramatic* that which is relative to the direct and concrete expression of the action being accomplished *really.* The recital and the familiar hypotyposis may be dramatic in the ordinary sense of the word: they are not so in that which I give to it here for the sake of simplification.

tics and decadents showed to us in such a fatal light. Far from being dissolved in becoming intelligible, the springs of this personality's activity are reinforced by, and as it were soaked in, intelligence. A scrupulous anxiety for life, a faculty to lead the sinuous advance of thought to the direct evocation of man in action, these establish an incontestable spiritual kinship between Meredith and Carlyle. Nothing is more instructive than a comparison of the intellectual positions of the two men. Carlyle owed to Goethe the firm resolution to concentrate his thought on life,—*gedanke zu leben;* but as he did not create this life he had to seek it, to beg for it. He dreamed of life, but he did not master it, hence it was that he discerned in it—as often happens when one is undergoing something—a fatality oppressing him. This entertained his humours, his sarcasms, and prevented him from avoiding coming to grief over aristocracy. His thought was at the level of history, it was difficult for him to lower it to the details of daily life, where, however, resided the secret he was seeking. His thought needed catastrophes and heroes. Carlyle's criticism is a long Imitation, chaotic and passionate, of the gods to which his

anxious sensibility raised altars, an intelligent and dramatic symphony of the great events of history. Meredith also is a historian, but he is the historian of the life he creates. This producer is the sovereign master of his material, as of the instruments of his production; this philosopher studies the laws of a world brought to birth by himself. For that matter he is not obedient to the caprices of imagination and feelings, but the reality upon which the effort of his intelligence bears, instead of being imposed upon him from the outside, is furnished to him by the spontaneous activity of his mind without thereby losing the positive characteristics which render it valid for all men of one culture. The mind escapes from the tyranny of the object, but meets this object in itself and re-creates its essential reality: the distance separating Meredith from Carlyle is the measure of the progress of modern thought in so far as it seeks to know and determine life.

Finally dramatic analysis enabled Meredith to constitute a psychology differing profoundly from both that of the analysts and that which may be deduced from pure dramatic evocation. While agreeing to make a tracing as it were of intuition,

to respect the characters and contours of life, intelligence retains the sovereign privilege of judgment. Thanks to the perfect harmony reigning in Meredith between intuition and analysis, between intuition seeing the individual feel and act, and analysis explaining and defining his feelings and his actions, the characters of his novels lead a double life, a real life and a possible life, the latter being suggested by the judgment accompanying the expression of the former. In other words Meredith's characters, at the same time as they feel, think, and act, are situated in a hierarchy through the estimation of their thoughts, sentiments, and acts. They reveal to us unconsciously what they might or ought to become under the influence of some other intellectual and moral discipline, without ever depriving us of the certainty that they cannot really be other than they are. By this way round thought is made to overtake the concessions it has made to life, at least is imposed on life, and sets its seal on it. To live, for Meredith, is first to affirm oneself absolutely, but it is also and essentially to be estimated, judged, and situated. The difference between the character's consciousness and the author's consciousness is the just measure of the character's

value, weight, and rank. Hence the importance of the 'Comic Spirit' in Meredith's work. It may be said that a man is comic in so far as he does not perceive his place in the human hierarchy, believes he is the centre of the world, and, as a good 'sentimentalist,' vaporizes his instincts while believing that he is sublimating them. The hero himself is comic *when he does not correctly think his heroism*, for then truth escapes from him and, intact and smiling, takes refuge in the consciousness of the sage observing him. In the most pathetic crises of life, the sobs are delightfully accompanied by laughter.[2]

Therefore, prospective psychology, but also normative psychology. The judgment of fact is

[2] Joyfully one recovers in Meredith the comic severity and inflexibility which renders the work of Molière so mordant and durable. The author of *Le Misanthrope* and the author of *The Egoist* have the same inexorable manner of rendering vain—by using a set of mirrors as it were—the movements and pretensions of any individual committing some vital error. This is because both had the sense of life and the taste of reason. Only Meredith, instead of the Molièresque club, handles a fine needle with which he seeks out, in the most secret folds of the sentiments, the parts that have gone to sleep and the decayed pieces which are corrupting action and putting it out of gear. On the other hand if he does not hesitate about capital punishments, if no one actually eludes his comic net, he never brings us backward, as Molière does, by the sudden release of a spring. The issues which he shows us all open on the future. Or rather it is not a question of the future, but exactly of the spiritual activity with which one must be in tune to come through trial triumphantly. And this is how he is a modern.

duplicated by a judgment of value, whether explicit or not, which follows (instead of preceding, as in the thesis novel) the dramatic intuition of a personality. The character's *truth* constitutes in a way the indirect proof of a higher truth, an ideal truth, which the author does not deduce from an abstract principle more or less adjusted to experience, but which results on the contrary *from a consciousness of this experience more complete than that reached by the individual undergoing it.* The Meredithian ideal is not introduced to life as a foreign body: it would be fused with the action itself if the latter became absolutely transparent to the intelligence of the one acting. I shall show presently how Meredith, with a really philosophical audacity, made intelligibility the condition of the full blooming of the vital instinct, inviting us to identify the sentiment of the ideal with the sentiment of reality. Let us only note here that he makes stand out from any human event by the same one and complex creative act, a reality, a sense, and a direction.

It is remarkable that the great works of the romantic liquidation contain no judgments, in the

strong sense of the word, that in them thought glides timidly near life without ever daring to go up to it frankly. Look at Ibsen: what do his dramas consist of? A cry, then a gnashing, then a groan, then silence—never any words. And Dostoievsky: he indeed really seeks to formulate the law of man; all his work is uplifted like a chest by a strong aspiration for more air, for more light. But the mass of life which he creates stifles him; his intuition is so rapid and complete that he is able to forego analysis and nearly always ends by foregoing it. He produces real life so miraculously that he finds neither time nor strength to create possible life; and when he forces himself to do so, he is able to think this possible life only along the fatal movement of the real life making and unmaking itself around him. Both seem to believe that a living individual makes thought burst out or deforms it by the simple play of his activity. Meredith on the contrary soon convinces us that the exercise of intelligence is indispensable, not only for the full comprehension, but also for the perfect *realization,* of life, that one lives more intensely and better in proportion to one's being more lucid. On

the other hand he demonstrates through his work that all valid knowledge of life is the result of a reflection upon man in the moment wherein he acts, wherein he undergoes the trial of experience. Consequences: if one wants to know the individual it is necessary not to *look* at him, but to *make* him live, but in order to make him live one must know him and think him, for thought will not allow itself to be attached to life to satisfy the refined curiosity of an *élite, it must be made to participate as a necessary agent in the creation of life.* And since thought must employ life's terms and respect its articulation, knowledge of man and the dramatic expression of the individual are fused in a same act of creation both intuitive and rational. To think human personality with the same concentration, method, continuity, and scruple, usually brought to the solving of great theoretical problems, and to think it in the unforeknowable becoming of its activity, such is the double task which Meredith imposes upon himself, and which he imposes upon himself only because a singularly happy concurrence of faculties enables him to do so.

II

Henceforth we know how Meredith is to be studied: the goings-on of his thought being in close relation with his dramatic expression of life, one must begin with the study of the latter. His philosophy is enveloped by his technique,—more than that, this technique reveals the method which he utilizes to attain to knowledge. Do not seek Meredith's logic in official manuals, but watch it come out naturally—and yet as by a miracle—of his poetry.

For Meredith is a poet. His pages are covered with a vegetation of entangled images whereby the rich breadth of poems is conferred upon them. And believe indeed that they are true images, rich with sensible substance, stirring us and amplifying our sentimental resonances, the images of a Celtic bard or Welsh incantator. They have all the qualities of poetry: the spontaneity, the rightness, the penetrating sharpness, the power of creating mysterious alliances through space and time. They are not even lacking in the quality of being untranslatable, since they are of one body with the subtle rhythm of a sentence and the flexion of a word.

Translation diminishes a Meredith novel for exactly the same reasons that it diminishes a poem: we have the impression of reading the account of a festival which we have not witnessed.

Even as the reading of Carlyle made Taine giddy, so a first reading of Meredith makes us giddy: he thinks in images as Montaigne did, more dynamically even than Montaigne did. He feels a singular propensity to represent all a thought's articulations by little imaginary beings who act a figured scene without the rigorous course of this thought ever being interrupted or turned aside. But it happens that the latter becomes entirely hidden behind the movements of these little dancing figures; and as it is itself often rather difficult to apprehend, and that we are obliged, to conceive the analogy, to follow the unfolding of the scene-image, we are driven to an incessant and often painful course of gymnastics, excellent nevertheless for developing a suppleness of the intelligence and for maintaining it in constant relation with life. But what about the garbling of these scene-images, those passages in which the expression of a single idea is delegated to different actions which criss-cross and become inextricably tangled? It would

be a mistake to detect an attitude, an effort of preciosity, in this capering mode of expression. The apparition in Meredith's consciousness of the scene-image assuming immediately the expression of a most abstract idea was as spontaneous as that of a visual image in a romantic's imagination. We are here in the presence of a veritable harmony pre-established between rational thought and poetic thought, Leibniz's accord of clocks.

But these images do not only eminently fulfil their poetic function. Like all the elements of Meredith's technique, they are utilized for other ends, they are made to serve in the expression of a certain mode of knowledge. In short *they constitute a defense system against abstraction.*[3] It is indeed remarkable that Meredith's style is never so charged with images as when he is emitting general reflections or when, ceasing for a moment to make his characters live, he meditates upon their character and their actions. Then, regarding, for example, the financial stringency of Diana of the

[3] Let us insist on the proper use of an often ill-used word. Considering the dramatic continuity of an individual, all that is isolated, *abstracted* from this continuity to be examined *independently* by the intelligence, belongs to the domain of abstraction. The French analysts are often abstract. In short in the painting of sentiments all that is not dramatic in the sense defined above is thereby abstract.

Crossways, with one wave of his comic wand he metamorphoses Debit and Credit into Mr. Debit and Mrs. Credit, conferring upon them the attributes and qualities of man and woman in our civilization, and throws Diana into an animated debate with them, a debate which contains in dramatic form the essentials of the remarks which a Balzac would have explained complacently in a discursive style. Or else he thinks directly with images. The artifice, in this case, consists in representing the most concrete possible equivalent for a mental movement, but in such a way that thought is able nevertheless to continue to progress.[4] Meredith fills in the intervals of the action with little symbolical actions because he is anxious above all not to let his thought and that of the reader lose their dramatic rhythm.

At other times the image is used to verify the analysis, to re-fuse the thought in the intuition whence it sprang. Beauchamp learns that Renée de Croisnel had been engaged, 'sold,' to an old French marquis, before their first meeting. His

[4] Thus, regarding the pity inspired by the Egoist: 'He would desire to clothe himself at everybody's expense and is of that desire condemned to strip himself stark naked.' The Egoist is pathetic: 'Only he is not allowed to rush at you, roll you over, and squeeze your body for the briny drops.'

disappointment is terrible. Then it occurs to him that she is innocent, that she is unaware of the sin residing in a loveless marriage; 'and this thought restored her to him, somewhat as a drowned body is given back to mourners.' Aminta's personality is defined in her gaze: 'They were large dark eyes, eyes of the southern night . . . they rolled forth an envelopment. A child among toys, taught to think of other toys, might gaze in that way. But these were a woman's eyes.' Such comparisons allow for all the rich complexity of an extremely subtle intuition and experience; they succeed in preserving what is specific in a moment of sensibility.

Thus certain of Meredith's images cause a current of concrete activity to pass through pure thought; others maintain thought in close contact with intuition; others again (one might cite hundreds) contribute, as do the first, to the orientation of psychological notations in the sense of carrying them along in the action's movement, but in this case at the very moment in which the action is accomplished. What a strange faculty of fitting the metaphor to the gait of thought even while preserving its vivifying freshness! Others have created

more plastic and more grandiose images: [5] no other has succeeded as Meredith has in associating them with the scrupulous and tortuous penetrations of analysis and the almost ineffable experiences of intuition.

Meredith is incomparable in the art of conferring upon thought the volume, mass, substance, and movement, of dramatic life, but he never forgets to ensure to this thought the best conditions of development, for his aim is to harmonize the act of creation with the act of judgment, and up to a certain point—as we shall see—to *identify* them, by respecting their own characters: complementary intentions of which we perceive the effects in his way of setting characters and making them act.

The principle of concrete activity which orders the play of images in Meredith also orders—and in a measure which distinguishes him from all other novelists—the physical and moral evolution of his characters. The ready-made, the lived, the monument, are radically banished from his work. No

[5] Meredith bowed before Hugo's supremacy. He granted him incomparable means of expression, but he added that he lacked the 'philosophic brain.' He could perceive in his work 'none of the subtleties, deep but unobtrusive, that show that a mind has travelled.' (Vide *Letters*. Constable, Scribner, 1912). Note the anxiety to make the poetic expression harmonize with the thought's experience.

deductions, documents, or abstract co-ordinates. His characters are because they are and draw their reason for being only from themselves; but—and this is of the first importance—they only are because they act, *their being depends upon their activity.*[6] An activity all external, all physical, an activity of relation; an internal activity of the sentiments which certain circumstances raise to the point of ebullition; reactions, adaptations, contractions, and stretchings; an incessant trial of the elasticity and temper of the vital springs; palpitations, psychical and physical emanations of dramatic fluid, shocks of words and wills, zigzags of thought seeking itself, vacillations of consciousness: Meredith's human world is a world of vibrations, his creatures are perpetually being *displaced,* they flash like waves in the sunlight. But the centre of their activity—therefore, the basis of the balance ensuring their situation, existence, and resistance—is in themselves, not in the zone of their external action. The latter, at first spontaneous, is immediately reflected by their sensibility, thanks to a

[6] This word must be understood in the sense it has in physiology when one speaks of the activity of tissues, and also in the sense in which one says in ordinary life that a man is active.

shock whereby the vital impulse [*élan vital*] is paralyzed or slowed down.

The drama of Meredith's characters is always and essentially the drama of an exacting sensibility. They begin by going straight ahead, in the direction of life, along the road of action. Their first acts, however rich and generous they may be, are simple, normal, not to say conventional. Diana marries to escape the humiliating insistence of men. Clara Middleton at first yields to Sir Willoughby's romantic charm. Beauchamp begins with the strictest patriotism. Since they can live only by acting, they act at first in perfect harmony with the circle in which tradition has caused them to be born. But then sensibility, at the first collision, is awakened. They feel confusedly that they can no longer live in the conditions which at first they accepted. And there they are, thrown back upon themselves, attentive, on the alert, seeking anxiously among the echoes of experience the key to the enigma which shall deliver them. To live for them is to seek to think, but to think in order to be able afresh to breathe, act, and bloom. The sacred sense of life never deserts them. Their will's

tension is born of a desire for relaxation. They are unaware of abstract cramp and aesthetic swoonings.[7] Even Beauchamp, though possessed by the demon of Logic, never becomes unconscious of those parts of his sensibility whereby he is attached to the social circle he is fighting. Thus their anxiety is not in the least Hamlet's. They are unstable because they really want to be stable. This is to say that *their instinct of conservation calls upon their intellectual consciousness,* invites it to order their passion, to compose for them a breathable life. 'I want to think,' exclaims Diana, her lips still burning from Dacier's kiss. I know of nothing more pathetic and less *intellectual* than this appeal to the intelligence, nothing which can

[7] Meredith was not content with thinking in the heart of an atmosphere of life, that atmosphere had to be tonic, exalting man's physical forces. His heroes are athletes. He is felt to be haunted by the anxiety to furnish intelligence with all the powers acquired by man outside and as it were unbeknown to intelligence. In the same way moral blooming for him runs together with vital blooming. This is what renders his smiling wisdom so exacting and pitiless at bottom. Here is probably the most serious objection one could make to Meredith: 'Your philosophy is a philosophy for champions, but your champions are already, before they undergo the training of experience, too well endowed, too muscular: they are all coming men and coming women (and your preferences run to the latter). You leave the first steps of the ascent in the shade.' The fact is that at the time when he was alive Meredith, in full struggle, having very strong resistances to overcome, had necessarily to rely on the support of an *élite.*

make us better understand an ardent and almost desperate effort to repel life in order better to live it. The struggle for life is transformed in Meredith's heroes into a struggle for lucidity, a lucidity rendered necessary by the profound exigencies of their tendency to persevere in their being. Their spontaneous activity is duplicated by a reflected activity, and we perceive here the chink through which Meredithian analysis, while scrupulously following the movements of life, also penetrates it with its thousand antennae, and insensibly draws together with a supreme tact the creation of life and the creation of thought.[8]

Marvellous exchanges between intuition and thought! Free and equitable exchanges of which the steady fecundity enabled Meredith to forego—without a shadow of disdain, but with the smiling doubt of probity—those technical artifices which

[8] Meredith—in agreement in that with present-day science and doubtless the science of tomorrow—could see no fundamental difference between living, or so-called *physical* activity, and intellectual activity. That is why by bringing as close together as possible the life and thought of his characters he ensured to his own thought a living object, avoiding thus the irreducible and false dualism of the thesis-novelists and other rationalists. As certain contemporary psychologists of whom he was the intuitive precursor do, he conceived thought as a sequence of combinations, following certain laws, and of sensations and images which could be reduced in the last analysis to *movements*.

novelists hold dearest. Since intuition takes hold of life in the making, in the perfecting of itself, there can be no question of deducing an individual's acts from premises set in advance, any more than of describing them from the outside, since such a form of description implies always that thought is lagging a little behind life. Thinking must be done in the course of the action, psychology carried out on the run. — But even so such psychology needs a basis, a starting point? — That must be the intuition of being. — But what kind of intuition, since being must be caught in its becoming? — Precisely the intuition of an individual's psychic state during all the important phases of his activity. Intelligence must *understand* all conscious and unconscious motives, their combinations and what indicates them in relation to a *unique* act (since it never happens again), *and one which cannot be thought a priori* (since it is the unforeknowable product of a living activity). Observe that this psychic state may be said to be isolated from intelligence by the innumerable networks forming its complexity, that intelligence cannot allow itself to slide down its natural slope, that it must on the one hand trust in intuition and on the other

integrate this immediately so as not to fix the analyzed personality, but be instead in a position to accompany it in its becoming. To perform such a master-stroke a veritably extraordinary accord of intuition and intelligence, an intellectual celerity and a spirit of finesse—in the Pascalian sense of the word—were necessary.[9]

Consider also the results: when Meredith comes to the big scenes, the decisive turning points, his metaphorical and often too cramped style gives place to simple and brief notations which would appear dry if we did not know them to be full to bursting point of sounds and consciousness. Drawn clearly at the end of a minute, slow, and energetic investigation into the tiniest veinings of feelings, the action is built up on two planes, like Leibniz's universe: a first reflecting it in its apparent simplicity even as it is offered to us in immediate experience; a second in which the network of thoughts charging and balancing it are seen transparently.

[9] Meredith's method must not be confused with that of Stendhal, who also practised psychology on the run. Stendhal always scores a bull's-eye and we exclaim: 'What a clever player!' but his psychology appears schematic and superficial when compared with Meredith's. He does not elucidate through intelligence the *coenaesthesic* (may I be pardoned this ugly word!) impression which an individual feels at every moment of his activity. Stendhal indeed draws souls, but he draws them from a bird's-eye view.

The result is that Meredith completely masters with intelligence an action which is set naturally *outside* intelligence. *The simple statement of an action thus assumes the validity of a judgment, and of an act of the mind creating life because it is the product of a series of judgments which have constructed the conditions of life in a given case.* Thus the famous problem of the transition from analysis to dramatic expression is solved, and solved to the advantage of both.

We may now conceive more clearly the problem implicit in Meredith's work: life has to be thought within the limits of intuition, but also living activity and intellectual activity have to be accorded as far as possible within these same limits, and a continuous creative interaction between life and thought must be established. To think a personality consists not only of knowing it, but also and especially of developing it by intelligence, of modelling it by judgment, of submitting it to the laws of the mind without ever suppressing the guarantee of intuition. Thereby Meredith renders at least possible the extension of reality by the ideal, since the ideal after all is nothing else but the consciousness of man's profound reality and his trial by

action.[10] This is indeed why everything which might hinder the free activity of his mind is deliberately left aside by his technique. It has been said that his novels were badly composed: but does not composition, so dear to Mr. Bourget, offer the double inconvenience of subordinating the living unity of the individual to an ideal and factitious unity, and of withholding this unity from thought by making it part of an objectively contemplated whole? [11]

[10] This of course concerns only individuals of an *élite*. The great difference between Meredith and other idealists is the result of the fact that for him: 1° each being's ideal is a *possible* and *realizable* experience in conditions which also favour the satisfaction of vital tendencies, and even, up to a certain point, social and traditional tendencies; 2° this ideal is not conceived by the mind, but *exacted* by the sensibility, so that it is in order to live, to breathe, that the individual is brought to surpass the *actual* conditions of his life.

[11] Meredith is radically and happily incapable of conceiving and conciliating either more or less two distinct unities, the living unity of individuals and their actions, and decorative unity, the aesthetic unity in itself and for itself. This is so to such an extent that the very scenes of his novels retain their balance only thanks to reality and intelligence, being deprived of the support of the accompaniments, traditional motives, familiar ditties, and all the prepared moulds which authors use to inform the material of their imagination. Meredith's supreme art consists indeed in first setting going in us cycles of aesthetic habits, so to speak, then of brusquely stopping the play of our automatism, and training us to the non-concerted movements of life. I am thinking especially of those two admirable scenes: the final interview between Carinthia Jane and her husband (*The Amazing Marriage*) and Renée's apparition in Beauchamp's house in *Beauchamp's Career*. Nothing more purely and more sternly alive can be imagined. The characters are not part of a story. They

III

Here we are brought back to human personality and to those judgments of personality implied in the very process of creation by Meredith. But when encountering judgments one must at once consider the man judging. The fact that Meredith *chooses* individuals gifted with a sensibility profound enough for them to set at every moment of their activity the terms of a certain human problem,—and this unconsciously, through the way in which they react—is an invitation to study the mechanism of his choice and how he goes about imposing on life the laws of his thought.

In reply to a few highly significant remarks by Meredith on Hawthorne ('I think his delineations untrue: their power lies in the intensity of his ego-

make their lives in front of us, and, as it were, gropingly; one does not feel that the author is composing them; one feels rather that his thought awaits to be composed by them. Hence it is that Meredith's scenes are left to themselves, that they do not produce their quarterings of literary nobility, that they cannot be put into formulae nor can a poetic be deduced from them. They are to dramatic literature what William James's analyses are to philosophic literature, that is to say exactly the opposite of the theatrical associations of Balzac, the sentimental variations of Dickens, the strophes of Flaubert, and the patient paintings of Thomas Hardy. No doubt a close link will be perceived between this technical peculiarity of Meredith's and the most fecund views of his philosophy.

tistical perceptions, and are not the perfect view of men and women.'), Captain Maxse must no doubt have scored some hits, for the author of *Feverel* wrote to him: 'As regards Hawthorne, little Meredith admits that your strokes have truth. I strive by study of humanity to represent it: not its morbid actions. *I have a tendency to do that, which I repress: for, in delineating it, there is no gain. Much of my strength lies in painting morbid emotion and exceptional positions; but my conscience will not let me so waste my time.* Hitherto consequently I have done nothing of mark. My love is for epical subjects—not for cobwebs in a putrid corner; *though I know the fascination of unravelling them.*'

These words draw a frontier. Pronounced by a man belonging to an aged civilization, whose sensibility has been made supple to the point of being dislocated, in whose spirit morbid germs were fermenting, they signify that this man has discovered in us an eternal spring. A discovery more fortifying, to my sense of things, more enlightening, more healing, than a mystical revelation, since it places in us the centre and the key of our redemption. Meredith's familiars are astounded at the heroic

will to which this choice bears witness.[12] 'Hitherto consequently I have done nothing of mark.' What a criticism, so simple in its profundity and pride, of the utilitarianism of men of letters! How one feels that Meredith believed possible, beyond his present sensible experience, an ideal experience which he devoted himself to realizing by a heroic cultivation of his sensibility! It is in this letter that one must seek the key to his work. Such a choice is of a religious order, or I do not know what the word means. It implies a deep faith in a force commanding human activity, a force in which man participates and which he must serve, for otherwise one cannot see why to satisfy one's instincts by giving them the finest possible expression would be 'to waste one's time.'

But also what a faith in the resources of life!

[12] Freud would have no trouble in discovering the symbols of this repression in the contortions and grimacings of his style, in the cramped ellipses and sinuous ways of his thought, in his love for 'exceptional positions,' in that manner which is his alone of analyzing a sane emotion with a 'morbid' minuteness. But these torsions, these spasms, these jerkings, which border on the decadent—and which in fact are found among the decadent—express nearly always a sane thought, create the freshest and most vigorous beings; and that, so naturally, by such a necessary movement, that we are persuaded that such means were needed to obtain such a result. This is one of Meredith's miracles: he was able to give free rein to the caprices of his ego without interfering with his objective and optimistic vision of humanity.

The core of Meredith's thought is the belief that the moral universe is under a law of attraction. 'The light of every soul burns upward,' he writes in *Diana*. 'Of course, most of them are candles in the wind. Let us allow for atmospheric disturbance.' A struggle against moral gravity, an ascent of the soul which the eddies nearly turn into an abstraction, but which, observed by the attentive and kindly gaze of the sage, remains the essential tendency of the 'sons of the earth.' With a force as primitive and sane as that South-Wester he so loved, Meredith disperses morbid miasmas, thanks to a will to live, a belief, and a judgment, fused into a powerful moral aspiration. The problem of life is a problem of intensity. The philosopher is self-imposed with the primordial task of seeking and selecting the most ardent and the best-fed focuses.[13] An aristocratic selection, a primary of the spiritual resistance to which Meredith willingly subordinated the termite work of the intelligence.

Meredith's psychology and philosophy both assumed the existence of an *élite* susceptible of ap-

[13] Here is one of Mr. Fernandez's characteristic plays on words, the French for focus meaning likewise both furnace and hearth (the latter as in Latin). It is as furnaces that the focuses are 'most ardent and best-fed,' and the word is, as it were, its own metaphor.—*Translator's Note.*

pealing to thought in order to live and capable of bearing that thought's radiations. I believe that the following paragraphs will show clearly how he understood the trial.

Meredith is replying in an intimate letter to a friend who says he is in love. He advises him to test his love before committing himself and teaches him the true and stern method: 'Have you found her? A boy can't, but a man must reason, in these cases. You may know your love from its power of persisting and bearing delay. If your love of this person is true, and not one of your fancies, it will soon light you clear enough.' Then, after asking his friend to think, compare, and weigh, instead of yielding to his instinct, he adds: 'The great difficulty is to be honest with ourselves. If there comes a doubt, the wave of passion overwhelms it. *Try and listen to your doubt.* See whether you feel, not what we call love, but tenderness for her. Satisfy yourself on this point. And then determine to wait. You can, *if your heart has conceived real tenderness.* If not, should you marry her?' [14] And

[14] *Letters,* Vol. I, p. 38. And this remark so precise and apt: 'Will she and can she bear poverty? . . . Remember that very few women bear it and retain their delicacy and charm.' The current of passion must be reascended to the phase in which it is most imperious.

if his friend succeeds nothing will be able to threaten the integrity of the sentiment thus conceived, located, and defined, by reflection.

How far this is from the 'intermittences of the heart'! Thus, a sentiment is not ripe, is not even born, and already we are undergoing the charges of passion, and, with the help of reason and will, forces of resistance must be sought beyond our present affectivity in the representation of the loved being. A sentiment is not a sensation, but a perpetual possibility of *correct copies* by the action of a certain pretension, a possibility guaranteed by the intuition of an internal resistance. *Hence the obligation to master and surpass our present affectivity*, to analyze it as one analyzes a problem or an action for which one will be held responsible to a community. A veritable experience which we must realize by all possible means, by utilizing the history of the heart, and if necessary theoretically through precise signs, as a man of science determines through correspondences a phenomenon he is unable to see directly.

By his criticism of the explosion of passion as well as by his sense and respect of living unity, Meredith condemns and surpasses romanticism.

And his work is not the preface to one of those factitious renascences such as occur today, the apostles of which only turn inside out the old 1820 coat while shouting loudly that they have invented a new cut. Such doctrines make our regeneration depend on a religious, political or economic system external to the individual, a system whereby the latter's *apparent* activity can certainly be modified, but under which his profound reform must always be left in doubt. It is to be feared that such an exclusive and incomplete course of gymnastics must put both intuition and thought, irreplaceable, delicate instruments, out of gear. In instituting the heroism of private life by the dramatic analysis of sentiments, Meredith has revealed a far more acute intelligence of modern man's exigencies. The romantic lived on his present affectivity which he transformed into an absolute, and thereupon built his systems, justifications, and despairs. Meredith understood that the crisis which the romantic's son was going through was essentially a *crise de confiance:* the individual drew back alarmed in face of the individual's bankruptcy. But instead of sending him to a reformatory, he renewed his confidence by showing him in the depths of him-

self, so to speak, powers of activity sought by sensibility but undiscoverable and unconquerable by sensibility without the help of intelligence. He was guided in this delicate tuning by an extremely fine sense of the quality and conditions of *effectivity* in human action. In harmonizing, with unrivalled happiness and tact, the dramatic expression creating life and the analysis creating consciousness, he shows to the point of evidence that their place of encounter and balance is precisely action, the supreme measure of truth. Considering an anti-clerical campaign premature, he writes to Maxse: 'The fanatical worship of truth will always be worthless: it is nothing better than the embracing of a phantom. For, what is truth?' Such words show what pragmatism—free in this case, it is true, of all dogmatic intention—brings to modern culture. Truth is losing its capital. It is no longer an immutable Idea, a notion in the mind, a phantom in the eyes: truth is an accord between a moment of history and a moment in man's internal life, between the latter's acts and the testimony furnished to him by the former, an accord realized by the attentive criticism of a heroically solicited intelligence. Hence how can romanticism be justi-

fied? If the ego skids on things, the ego must be badly balanced; if things vanish in it, then it does not preserve their essentials.

Meredith is the first to have shown that in the order of life a romantic or decadent judgment is always a false judgment, because it is not formed in the conditions necessary to all true thought. He beheaded romanticism. We can still feel its twinges and shudderings: we are no longer entitled to mistake these for thoughts.

Unfortunately the influence of this astounding precursor who was writing in the days of George Eliot novels which still seem to us today audacious and all oriented towards the future, has been so far practically negligible. His work has not ploughed any furrows in our field. And yet, like Goethe, Meredith deserves that one should learn a foreign language merely in order to read him. It is time to receive his message. It is time to become aware of and obedient to it.

# VI

# THE GUARANTEEING OF SENTIMENTS AND THE INTERMITTENCES OF THE HEART

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Mais ils savaient d'instinct ou par expérience que les élans de notre sensibilité ont peu d'empire sur la suite de nos actes et la conduite de notre vie, et que le respect des obligations morales, la fidélité aux amis, l'exécution d'une œuvre, l'observance d'un régime, ont un fondement plus sûr dans des habitudes aveugles que dans ces transports momentanés, ardents et stériles. MARCEL PROUST.

[But they knew by instinct or by experience that the flights of our sensibility have little dominion over the continuity of our acts and the conduct of our life, and that the respect of moral obligations, faithfulness to friends, the achievement of a work, the observance of a system, have a surer foundation in blind habits than in these momentary, ardent and fruitless transports.]

## I

THE objections that are aroused by the work of Proust, considered as an integral analysis of the heart, as revealing the depths of our nature, may, in my opinion, be reduced to two essentials: it does not erect a hierarchy of values, and it does not manifest, from its opening to its conclusion, any spiritual progress.[1] This double lacuna puts it into an equivocal situation, which enables some people to greet in it the corner stone of a positive literature, free of hypocrisies, an architecture of the intelligence which would perform the task of reducing fancies and sublimations to real movements of the sensibility, and which leaves others, more ambitious or more cowardly, with a bitter

[1] It is extremely difficult for me to define, in a study not addressed to professional philosophers, what I understand here by spiritual. What for me is essentially spiritual is what Mr. Brunschvicg calls, in connection with the Cartesians, 'the internal unification of which the contrary is multiplicity outspread *partes per partes*.' (See the discussion of the word *spiritualism* in the *Bulletin de la Société française de Philosophie*, January-February, 1917.) But adopting a strictly psychological point of view, I am considering here only the internal unification of each one's concrete experience, the act, the psychic contraction which enables the individual to attune his living activity to his intellectual activity, to make the synthesis of the two, and thereafter to progress, to grow *in so far as he is a living man*. It is this power of synthesis which, according to me, Marcel Proust lacked. His analysis ends in an 'outspread multiplicity' and the only progress in him is that of the intelligence.

bouquet of disenchantment. I shall reduce my criticism to a single example: by his masterly analysis of the 'intermittences of the heart,' Proust raises a problem of extreme gravity, for upon its solution depends our conception of the value of man and of the orientation of the future. It seems to me that it is altogether urgent, before the echoes respond on all sides to the master's voice, to pick up carefully the problems which he set without solving, or which he solved with hasty and often illegitimate generalizations. The Proustian analysis of the intermittences of the heart has this in particular about it that it reveals at one and the same time, and in a same movement of the mind, the mechanism of Proust's thought and its limitations.

The famous text, the first phrases of which make one think of the breathless and fiery notes of a fresh convert, is familiar:

*My whole person overwhelmed.* Already on the first night, while I was suffering from an attack of cardiac fatigue, trying to master my sufferings, I bent down carefully and slowly to take off my boots. But hardly had I touched the first button of my boot than my chest swelled, filled with an unknown, a divine *presence,* sobs shook me, tears coursed from my eyes. The being coming to my rescue, *saving me from the drought of the soul,* was the one who, several years earlier, at a moment

of identical distress and solitude, at a moment in which I no longer had any of myself, had entered, and had returned me to myself, for it was myself and more than myself (the container that is more than the contained and that was bringing it to me). I had just *perceived*, in my memory, bending over my fatigue, the tender features, preoccupied and disappointed, of my grandmother, as she had been on that first evening of arrival, the features of my grandmother, not of her whom I had been surprised at, and self-reproachful for, regretting so little, and who had of her only the name, but of my veritable grandmother whose . . . *living reality I met in an involuntary and complete recollection* . . . and thus, in a wild desire to throw myself into her arms, it was only at this instant, more than a year after her funeral, because of that anachronism which so often prevents the calendar of facts from coinciding with that of the feelings,—that I had come to learn that she was dead.

Then come some general reflections, highly significant, but before quoting their essence I should like to distinguish them from the preceding passage a little more precisely than has been done hitherto.

The eminent critics who have quoted these reflections seem to see in them the natural continuation of the affective overwhelming felt by Proust, as if this experience could be logically translated only by the law of the intermittences of the heart. But, in fact, this sudden reversal of values, this unex-

pected vision of reality, this passing without transition from the purely intellectual idea of the being to the shock provoked by its miraculous 'presence' in us, does not in the least imply the dissociation of personality which Proust deduces from it. What occurs here, on the contrary, is a normal stage of the spiritual progress towards more consistence and unity, the latter consisting essentially,—as Newman has established in definitive terms—in a passing from intellectual comprehension to *real* comprehension of a thing, a feeling, or an act. The law of the intermittences, of which you are going to reread the subtle enunciation, is only the restrained, and in a way the pathological, version of a human phenomenon of which it would falsify the sense if one did not hasten to put it at its level in the hierarchy of spiritual laws.

At whatever moment we consider it [Proust writes], our *total* soul has only an *almost fictitious* value, in spite of the numerous tally of its riches, for now some, then others, are unavailable, and this, by the way, just as much whether they be actual riches or those of the imagination, and for me, for example, quite as much for the ancient name of Guermantes, as for those how much graver, of the true recollection of my grandmother. *For to the cloudiness of memory are linked the intermittences of the heart.* It is doubtless

through the existence of our body, similar for us to a vase in which our spirituality might be enclosed, that we are induced to suppose that all our internal goods, our past joys, all our sufferings, *are perpetually in our possession.* Perhaps it is just as incorrect to believe that they get away or come back. Anyhow if they remain in us, most of the time they do so *in an unknown domain* where *they are of no service to us,* and where even the most usual ones are pushed back by recollections of a different order *which exclude all simultaneity with them in consciousness. But if the frame of sensations in which they are preserved is caught again,* they in their turn are endowed with that same power of expelling all that is incompatible with them, *of installing solely in us the ego which lived them.* Now as he whom I had suddenly re-become had not existed since that distant evening on which my grandmother undressed me upon my arrival at Balbec, it was quite naturally, not after the present day which that ego was unaware of, but—*as if there were, in time, different and parallel series*—without any solution of continuity, at once after the first evening of yesteryear, that I was adhering to the minute in which my grandmother had leaned towards me.[2]

It can be seen what Proust adds and what he subtracts by his analysis to and from the phenomenon of *realization* which he has so powerfully described. The real recollection—as opposed to the intellectual, fictitious recollection—is inscribed in a frame of sensations, and indeed, to imagine powerfully one must feel powerfully; but nothing guar-

[2] *Sodome et Gomorrhe* II, vol. I, pp. 178-89.

antees the effectiveness and duration of the hold on the real afforded to him by the live recollection, because the new ego thus created is bound up with the actual and sensorial frame out of which it was born. This ego does not react on its own account, does not seek to take advantage of the experience to reinforce the unity of Proust's moral person: as well say that it does not try to become a veritable ego. For there must be no mistake: whatever may be the bearing of his analysis, Proust creates confusion here by an improper use of the word soul and of the word *ego,* or, more exactly, he implicitly gives for one and the other definitions which would have to be accepted before being affirmed, either because he is mistaken or because he has renovated the psychology of the human heart. It appears in this passage that he understands by soul the *collection* of our sensible and affective experiences scattered in time, and by *ego* the passive subject of one of these experiences brought back into consciousness by memory thanks to an affective association. These definitions may correctly express reality, but in that case the only thing to do would be frankly to strike the two words from our vocabulary. We should then be composed of

independent and transitory waves of which our consciousness would register the as rapid as unexpected passages. They would have exactly the same value as those purely physical waves of pain or pleasure traversing us, which compress or open up our sensibility, and which we can prolong only by provisional and hasty reveries or pacify by drugs and the mechanical re-education of our will. In this multiplicity of relived experiences the only real link would be ensured by memory and the only possible principle of unity would be the intelligence which would co-ordinate these states by *comprehending* them. The only effective progress would be that of the intelligence, the only non-illusory perfecting would be the perfecting of our intellectual consciousness.

Accepting these judgments, and turning man towards practice and throwing him among his fellows, forthwith we must revise our ideas of moral guarantee and responsibility. Proust himself invites us to do so by the typical remark which serves as an epigraph for this study. I willingly believe it: if the flights of our sensibility are dependent upon a phenomenon of reminiscence, if to be aware of a sentiment we must await the affective

spark which will enable us to relive integrally an anterior experience, if to understand, and feel, and desire, and will, we must first undergo an inverted metempsychosis, whereby the useless forms of our past lives, imperious and exclusive, are returned to us, we are no better than those little South American republics which each month change their programmes and their promises with a change of dictators.

The problem is grave. If Proust is to be believed, not only can man not guarantee his sentiments, and consequently his acts, and consequently man must be an eternal failure, but also he must renounce the consolation of feeling that he progresses despite this discontinuity and this intermittent blindness and will be able to reduce and surpass both. A real progress is a growth, and a growth of the whole being. To understand better and better that one is not progressing is not progress: progress consists, on the contrary, in understanding better and better that one is feeling more and more sanely and that one wills with more and more effectiveness. All spiritual evolution must be accomplished, not in the interior of the intelligence, but in the interior of the individual. Therefore it is the problem of

spirituality, of the value of the ideal, of the future and of human progress, that is set by the Proustian analysis of the intermittences of the heart. It may be formulated in these terms: all that seems to us to be good and just, the internal forces guaranteeing our future words and acts, the aspiration towards the better state called the ideal, the sentiment of surpassing oneself called spiritual progress—all this is a discontinuous illusion of our senses, or, at least, in all this we can guarantee only the apparent results, thanks to various subterfuges: moral gymnastics, mechanization of our acts by habit. If the intermittences of the heart and their corollaries represent the depths of human nature, the supreme experience of our *ego,* then the spiritual life must be ranged in its entirety in the category of imagination, and the intelligence is the highest point of human development to which we may pretend. Then we must demand from the intelligence that sentiment of elevation, of dignity, of beatitude, that tradition demanded from the spiritual life. The victory of the intelligence would mark the defeat of the mind, and man's highest task would be to deny the millenary effort of man.

## II

Before concluding with Proust in vital renunciation and in the exclusive cult of the intelligence, it is necessary to do for him what he failed to do, to situate him in a hierarchy. For there is another manner than his of understanding oneself without surpassing oneself, that of Montaigne, which consists in ranking oneself in an order at the same time as putting oneself in order. I imagine a reader of Montaigne discovering himself to be, in the light of his intelligence, equal to him on almost all points except one or two, and seeing that these few distinctive traits are discerned by Montaigne himself in the figure of a hero, a saint, or simply of a man exhibited: thereupon this reader is naturally led to raise himself one degree, to try his luck in the superior regions; he does not know whether he will be able to live in them, but he knows that they exist and that others breathe in them easily. The more we advance in the reading of the *Essais,* the more we draw away from the rather rhetorical exercises at the outset, then the more we see Montaigne anxious not only to define himself, but further to *classify* himself: his ego does not fill the frame, there is

space around him in that noble picture containing Epaminondas. The great weakness of Proust's work, so splendid in many respects, is that everything is brought back in it to the lowest common denominator of a passive sensibility which manifests no index of maturity, that the field of our vision is obstructed in it by an *ego* larger than life-size which the most lucid analysis fails to render transparent.

To remedy this defect one must cross to the other side of the barricade and question the men who have seen in individual sensibility and imagination the guarantee of our sentiments and of the continuity of human effort. It is remarkable indeed that the more thought ripens, the more it conceives the necessity, so as to touch reality and plough its furrow, of being supported by the most concrete reactions of the individual which it opposes to the abstract undertakings of reason—notably, by that real comprehension of things which Proust has described in terms of dramatic lucidity. The most profound analyst of this thought, of this concrete logic so typically modern, Cardinal Newman, has given of it an interpretation well worth comparing with Proust's analysis.

Newman distinguishes two ways of understanding things: they may be understood *abstractly,* by inferences bearing on notions, and they may be understood *really,* by an act of assent bearing on concrete representation through our imagination of an experience, of a feeling, of a particular act. For example, before the 'overwhelming of his being,' Proust understood abstractly the death of his grandmother [3] and the affection which he bore her, he did not have a real comprehension of it. Newman sees in *real* assent (which he distinguishes from abstract assent, the conclusion of an inference) the strongest and most perfect hold that the mind may have on reality, veritable knowledge in the order of sentiment and in the order of action, and even in the order of ideas in so far as they are susceptible of enlisting all the forces of our being, and it is in

[3] Certainly the narrator had had the concrete experience of his grandmother's death, but some accident to his sensibility—no doubt the presence in him at that period of a different and exclusive ego—had prevented him from realizing this experience and of it he had retained only the idea. The knowledge which he had of the event belonged therefore, in a sense, to deduction. There is nothing in that that is not rather normal, especially if one remembers that in rethinking his experience Proust deepened it, augmented it by all the relief which the intelligence that pushes adds to reality. One must always in Proust take into account this magnifying-glass which he applied to himself, which produced a deformation exactly the opposite of imaginative deformation, but did not always differ in its effects.

that sense that Proust remarks, with a great aptness, that he had just 'learned' of his grandmother's death one year after the event. As far as this very point Newman and Proust are perfectly in agreement. The former even goes so far as to recognize, like the latter, the hazardous, unexpected and accidental character of the conditions of real assent. We cannot, he says, make sure for ourselves of real apprehension and assent, 'because we have to secure first the images which are their objects, and these are often peculiar and special. They depend on personal experience; and the experience of one man is not the experience of another. Real assent, then, as the experience which it presupposes, is proper to the individual, and, as such, *thwarts rather than promotes the intercourse of man with man.*'[4] And further on, still in connection with real assent: 'It cannot be reckoned on, anticipated, accounted for, *inasmuch as it is the accident of this man or that.*' The coincidence of thoughts is significant: there can be no doubt that Proust must have known and experimented with the first phase of the maturation of thought encrusted in us by images, which

[4] The quotations of Newman are taken from his *Grammar of Assent.*

enables us to fix our sentiments and to give weight and consistence to our personality.

But it is clear also that he knew only the first phase: his birth into spiritual life soon shows the characteristics of an abortion. Newman is as explicit as can be: for him the fixation of thought by concrete representations marks a considerable progress, a deepening of the spiritual life, and, as it were, a taking root of human values. 'They [real assents] are sometimes called beliefs, convictions, certitudes; and, as given to moral objects, they are perhaps as rare as they are powerful. Till we have them, in spite of a full apprehension and assent in the field of notions, we have no intellectual moorings, and are at the mercy of impulses, fancies, and wandering lights, whether as regards personal conduct, social and political action, or religion. These beliefs, *be they true or false in the particular case,* form the mind out of which they grow, and impart to it a seriousness and manliness which inspires in other minds a confidence in its views, and is one secret of persuasiveness and influence in the public stage of the world.' [5] Thus Newman discovers the

[5] *Ibid.* And elsewhere: 'Great truths, practical or ethical, *float on the surface of society,* admitted by all, valued by few . . . *until changed circumstances, accident* . . . force them upon its attention.'

roots of spiritual life in the very experience which according to Proust renders it impossible: he guarantees our sentiments and our acts through the operation which for the author of Swann involves the failure of our personality. And yet Newman's point of view is here clearly pragmatic, his conclusions are independent of any metaphysical postulate. Therefore, either Newman must not have known how properly to decipher his own experience, or there must have been in Proust's a principle of corruption which prevented it from unfolding normally.

Newman's opinion is singularly reinforced by that of Meredith, who, very hostile to the Cardinal's mysticism, not in the least anxious to ensure rigorous relations to speculative thought, and preoccupied only with attaining and following the individual through intuition and analysis, returns from his man-chase with experiences which confirm Newman's judgment. 'Wilfred,'[6] he says, 'was a gallant fellow. . . . But, he was young. Ponder on that pregnant word, *for you are about to see him grow*. One may also be a gallant fellow,

[6] Wilfred Pole in *Sandra Belloni*. According to Meredith, the type of 'sentimentalist' who feels his love diminished because a slight smell of tobacco is floating in his beloved's hair.

and harsh, exacting, double-dealing,[7] and I know not what besides, in youth. The question asked by nature is, "*Has he the heart to take and keep an impression?*" For, if he has, *circumstances will force him on and carve the figure of a brave man out of that mass of contradictions.*'

*Take* and *keep:* Proust takes but does not keep, or rather he keeps in a very peculiar fashion, and it would be perhaps more correct to say *that he is kept by the object of his impression.* For this impression, in being filtered through his consciousness, is not purified nor is it schematized so as to form both a kernel of sentimental resistance and a sheaf of tendencies oriented in a certain direction: instead of representing his experience by simplifying it, it projects his ego out of himself and fixes it in that experience. The process described by Newman and Meredith is accomplished in Proust in reverse order: to keep an impression is for them to transpose into

[7] Cf. Proust: '. . . my words and my thoughts as a young man ungrateful, selfish and cruel.' It is very remarkable that these psychological traits which Proust attributes to himself, and which he attributes in general to human nature, are seen by Meredith as the provisional characteristics of youth to be modified by the natural experience and development of the man. Could there have been in Proust a premature fixation of sensibility, an arrest of growth which he remedied later on through the bias of intelligence? This would explain perhaps the absence, in his work, of a properly spiritual progress.

the key of the mind a particular concrete experience, to cast off the spatial and temporal moorings of that experience, and to confer upon it the infinite plasticity of a living personality in perpetual growth; for Proust it is to fuse one's ego entirely in the experience, to deposit this ego at the points of time and space where the experience has taken place, and thereby *to cut it up into pieces each of which is identified with a particular experience and lodged in a corner of time which thus acquires a fixity and an externality which are characters proper to space.* The importance of time in the work of Proust has been much stressed: it has not been remarked enough perhaps that he gives to time the value and characters of space (as is shown notably by the expression, 'parallel series,' which he uses on its behalf), by affirming that the different parts of time are reciprocally exclusive and remain external to one another, whereas spiritual experience leads us to think, on the contrary, that we bring together all the moments of time in the actual moments of our duration.[8]

[8] I hope to deal at greater length with the very important problem of the relations between Proust and Bergson. Proust, who never gave to his thought a rigorous form, is at one moment Bergsonian, at another clearly anti-Bergsonian. Generally he has quite a Bergsonian manner of

## III

One cannot compare Proust to the great analysts of concrete thought without perceiving in his work a veritable reversal of thought. Newman and Meredith think in progressive schemes and tendencies, Proust thinks through the integral reconstruction of past experiences. It is thus seen how the form of Proust's experience prevents the intelligence from fostering the least vital and spiritual progress, since this intelligence, incessantly invited to rethink an experience in its integrality to give to Proust that self-intuition without which we cannot live, works automatically in the past. It is also seen that this peculiarity of his thought incites him to exaggerate, to stress in relief, a sensible disposition which another method and some other hygiene would perhaps have modified. In Newman and Meredith, on the contrary, the permanence of the impression, because the latter is spiritualized, accumulates in the mind a strong force which enables the intelligence to fulfil its proper

getting into contact with his duration (see the episode of the magdalen), but by the reactions of his intelligence upon his sensibility, which reactions determine the curve of his work, he rather tends to be oriented towards a *spatialization* of time and memory.

function, which is to surpass present experience, to create future. And note that I have chosen purposely two men who are not pure speculators, who consolidate their feeling with their thought and prove their thought through their living. Is it therefore not allowable to believe that Proust did not discover the germ of the unity and consistence of personality, that he did not catch in the net of his analysis the principle of a real sentiment?

It seems, indeed, that it is very dangerous to begin with the analysis of the sensible and affective manifestations of feeling, these being only one aspect of it and not the most significant one; and as one meets with these manifestations in many mental disorders, in nearly all disorders of the sensibility, and in what one may in general call crises of faltering, it follows that they serve as snares far more often than as guides in the study of feeling. In listening to them we hear only the mechanical voice of the body. In this connection Descartes pronounced some eternal words, picked up and meditated by the profound Alain.[9] Marcel Proust suffered from a hy-

[9] Professor Émile Chartier (b. 1876), the author of *Mars, ou la Guerre Jugée* (Paris: 1921); he obtained the pen name Alain from his namesake, Maistre Alain Charretier, the fifteenth century writer who for his 'golden words' was kissed by Mary Queen of Scots. This Charretier's *Curial* was translated into English by William Caxton.—*Translator's Note.*

pertrophied affectivity: now, pleasure and pain felt too strongly destroy the order of things and draw back to themselves the sentimental values through an easily conceivable subterfuge. Through the disproportionate resonances which they are able to ring from the body, they give a false voice to the soul, in the same way as ventriloquists surprise dumb spectators by making them speak. The victim of these strong discharges, misled by his intimate sense, and yielding to this imperious orchestration, ends by believing that he lives, whereas he is lived by the things of which these spasms are only the transient waves; nothing turns him aside from the supreme error consisting in mistaking sensations for sentiments; and when the affective wave ebbs, or some accident interferes with its breaking, suddenly he feels himself naked, useless, and emptied, until another wave uplifts him and creates for an instant the phantom of his ego. Most serious of all is that the preponderance of affective discharges prevents him from distinguishing things from one another through their value, and consequently from distributing wisely the effort of his intelligence, since the scent of a rose and the scent of a

soul alike create for him an ego and equally justify his aversion or his desire.

The absence of the moral element in Proust has been noticed,[10] but always as if it would have needed only some revelation or some mystical anxiety to bring about in him a recovery. I see the question for my part from an entirely other point of view. Mystical reactions mean no more in my eyes than sensible reactions, so long as I am not convinced of a man's power of creating sentiments with his impressions. For the whole problem is in that. One may form sentiments for oneself and obey them without mystical help—so long as one does not call mystical everything that is sentimental—and mysticism may be applied on to an incurable sensuality. This is not the place to enter upon details of an analysis of feeling, but it

[10] I am thinking especially of the pages devoted to Proust by François Mauriac and Henri Ghéon. The former (*Revue Hebdomadaire*, Dec. 2, 1922) remarks very finely that Proust's characters manifest no moral progress, the moral value of some of them being as spontaneous and involuntary as the weakness or vice of others. The latter notes the Proustian reduction of spiritual life to the sensible life. But there may be moral progress within the limits of a radical atheism and these critics make such a progress dependent upon a religious inspiration. Proust's defect for me is of a psychological order, it is a flaw in the machine; hence it may be observed independently of any metaphysical assumption.

will perhaps not be idle to indicate briefly the essential points of such an analysis.

In a recent study I defined a sentiment as 'a perpetual possibility of *correct copies* by the action of a certain pretension, a possibility guaranteed by the intuition of an internal resistance.' [11] If this definition is correct, the quite secondary value of sensible testimonies becomes at once perceptible: the two essential elements of a sentiment are the internal resistance and the pretension, or intention of the mind, both of which are confirmed, and especially *may at any moment be confirmed, by our acts.* Now, what is the cause of this internal resistance if not the image, the living representation which Newman makes the object of real assent, the impression which one must 'keep,' according to Meredith, if one wants to get out of the nebula of contradictions enveloping the origin of our being? And where may the pretension of the mind be sought if not in an understanding between the latter and the impression, in the faculty which we have of thinking this sentiment, *of according with the proper laws of the intelligence the impression with which an experience leaves us?* Thereupon, if on the

[11] *The Message of Meredith*, p. 187.

one hand we have an impression fixed by the images which represent in us what is outside us, and if on the other hand we have an intelligence which tends to combine, analyze, judge, progress in conformity with its own activity, *a sentiment must be born of a sort of psychic contraction which operates the synthesis of one with the other,* in such fashion that the activity of judgment be always regulated and guaranteed by the impression, and that the impression acquire the mobility, the transparence, and the certainty of judgment. Sentiment is therefore situated on a plane of consciousness intermediate between intellectual activity and sensible impression. One cannot say that it is a truth, since it is based upon an ineffable intuition which can be proved only by action; but neither can one say that it is a state of purely passive receptivity, since it participates in the activity of the mind and enables the latter to accomplish its most eminent function, which is to conceive with certainty the future. A man who has a deep sentiment *knows* how he would act in such and such circumstances because he has intimate knowledge of the immutable principle of his future actions. Sentiment therefore is much rather a response by all our being

which cannot be translated indifferently either into the language of the intelligence or into that of sensibility, but of which our acts are the veritable signs, the only ones which make possible the exact measurement of its value. It is easy to verify this by a counter-test: observe the conduct of an individual who is 'losing his head': you will remark that he applies himself unconsciously to enlarging into caricature the traits which we have noticed; but, as he is deprived of that centre of resistance and certitude which makes the whole reality of sentiment, he puts the cart before the horse and obstinately, by multiplied and memorable gestures, and in continually accelerating his delirium, mimics what he cannot attain. In order to demonstrate he is reduced to demonstrations. Such a man condemns himself to living with uplifted arm, and that is why we see him fumbling feverishly in all the recesses of sensibility to extract from them fresh proofs, and advancing, if necessary, right as far as death. On the contrary, the immediate expression of the true sentiment is silence, the religious silence of certitude, and it does not occur without a certain immobility, although it may produce violent movements. If it leads sometimes to the

most extreme resolutions, it never describes the foreseen curve of passion, and these resolutions always bear the mark of the suppleness and presence of mind, like a happy gesture, like a well conducted thought. For a true sentiment teaches how to think well as it teaches how to act well. Far from moderating the audacity of the imagination, it warms it up in the heat of an ineffable presence accompanying it in all its twistings; nothing material guarantees it, but it is able to guarantee itself by that I know not what which is eternal and appears in its slightest testimonies; and one may say that the true sentiment, whatever it may be, imprints the seal of justice upon the most terrible actions.

Here we perceive that the problem has turned: it is no longer a question of knowing if man can guarantee his sentiments in spite of the intermittences of the *heart,* but if he can do so in spite of the intermittences of *sensibility* and *affectivity.* We have seen that Proust reduced the heart to the state of sensible and affective receptivity, which contradicts the results of the complete analysis of sentiment practised upon themselves by men absolutely trustworthy. To simplify, let us call

*psychic contraction* the formation of sentiment such as we have described roughly, and *spiritualization* the sentimental elaboration of the sensible experience. I am saying that in Proust this contraction does not take place, that this spiritualization miscarries originally, and that the ego, at one moment tense, at once relaxes and spreads out alongside the object, then with the help of the intelligence, is stabilized and localized in the affective zone surrounding it. And his technique is at the same time rigorously symmetrical with his mental mechanism. When he makes his characters live, he proceeds exactly as when he organizes his experience: he never seizes what one may call the centre of radiance in a being, he does not integrate such a being, he sews recollections together and leaves the seams showing. The dynamism of his recollections may have created an illusion, but cannot be confused with creative dynamism. I shall be answered that it is because of this that he is truer than most novelists and analysts. But if it is true that the human mind is able to produce sentiments, Proust is not truer than those who have described their durable effects; if it is true that there have been artists who were able to place their

characters, so to speak, at the free disposal of their imagination without deforming them, Proust is not truer than such novelists. It is precisely because it is always marvellously true without ever being quite true that Proust's work raises such a grave problem.

—But, you will object, a sentiment such as you have just described, being extremely rare, concerns only a minute part of humanity, and we are admiring in Proust his incomparable manner of establishing the average in hearts.

—Let us understand each other: to Proust the symphonist of his affectivity I bear the homage of a total admiration, I joyfully greet his 'unhoped for' achievement, to borrow Charles du Bos's apt expression: it is with Proust the constructor of human nature that I am quarrelling, it is he that I believe it is all the more urgent to refute, since he has armed us with an irreplaceable method for fathoming ourselves. It is just because his machine is admirably conceived that the part missing must quickly be added in order that such a machine may work normally. Let us admit that true sentiment is an ideal: tradition teaches us that this ideal has been realized, and as everything that is real for one single

man is possible for all others, it is this possible never attained which magnetizes human nature and gives it a form in giving it a sense. It is not at the moment when we no longer depend upon anything but ourselves, when our figure must be cut entirely out of our stuff, that we should allow ourselves to be deprived of any one of our means. Now, this is what Proust does by suppressing, between the impression and the intelligence, the synthetic intermediary of sentiment, by rendering impossible the progressive spiritualization of our experience, and thereby by condemning the intelligence to understand in the past, to construct what has disappeared, to progress backwards. His work is not content with transforming the ascent towards the mind into an ascent towards the intelligence: it breaks a spring of our nature which we must repair as quickly as we can, it raises around us artificial barriers that we must first resolutely demolish. We shall then understand far better his true beauty, the marvellous effectiveness of his method, and the masterless energy of an intelligence which sticks to things and lets go of them only after having espoused every contour.

The intermittences of the *heart* therefore merely

set a problem of hierarchy: they have their place, and it is a legitimate place, below sentiment which they disturb and which gives us the strength, if not to reduce them, at least to dominate them. In this sense it is true that a real sentiment is never more evident for us than when it does not awaken echoes in our body, since then it is an ideal, but an ideal which gives to us the same sort of certitude as a successful experiment or a true judgment. Certitude, the sensible impulse: these are the two ends of the chain which modern man must hold on to firmly, at the same time connecting them progressively with intermediate links. Unless one is to bid farewell all of a sudden, and by decision, to spirituality. But, I ask, is it possible to consider man in his reality, in his whole reality, without taking into account his spiritual tendencies, and is it not obvious that, far from being added to him from the outside, like a strange body which would not alter anything in his constitution, they develop, try, and modify, the most hidden parts of his nature, that his least aspiration is a sign of which a graphology subtle enough would take advantage, and that finally we know indeed what he is only when we know what he wants to be? So

that in reading Proust and admiring him, I can nevertheless draw no conclusions concerning human nature, because I have before my eyes only a restricted, fixed, and outspread, part of this nature. And let it not be said that it is thus at bottom, and that the rest is illusion, an artificial superstructure: as well pretend that all that is real in the statue is the material with which it is made.

# VII

# THE EXPERIENCE OF NEWMAN

## VII

# THE EXPERIENCE OF NEWMAN[1]

> Now Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. HEB. xi. 1.

> I cannot avoid being sufficient for myself, for I cannot make myself anything else, and to change me is to destroy me. If I do not use myself, I have no other self to use. My only business is to ascertain what I am in order to put it to use.
> JOHN HENRY CARDINAL NEWMAN.

I SHOULD like the reader kindly to consider this insufficient study as an invitation to retire into himself, to forget for a moment the immediate solicitations of his life, in order to consider the two or three principles that I am going to borrow from Cardinal Newman. He will find in these pages neither an analysis of his genius nor a criticism of his work. The former would exact much time, the latter a competence I do not in the least possess;

[1] A translation of this essay by Mr. Richard Aldington appeared in *The Criterion* for October, 1924.

but what I deem myself in a position to assert is, that among all thinkers susceptible of furnishing solutions for modern problems, Newman is one of the most authentic and without doubt one of the most inexhaustible. This quasi-medieval priest is especially, let us even say uniquely, modern owing to the biases he chooses and the angle at which he considers things; by the kind of difficulty he feels, by his manner of being perplexed. Certainly the religious problem (I mean the dogmatic problem) remains rather on the margin of what might be called the dramatic zone of modern French thought: on the hither or the thither side of this thought it is considered either as a stage already completed or else as a goal still distant. But just because he thinks as we think something other than what we think, Newman renders us the more aware of a resemblance which in these conditions assumes an impressive character of necessity.

One does not choose one's mystery and we cannot make ours be his. But is it not singular that in trying to define the latter he should advise us that we have one waiting to be elucidated? In reading him we feel that we are wandering in the most familiar regions of our ego. If I had to mark the

dominant trait in his genius, I believe I should stress his faculty for obscuring things through the very excess of his clarity. His light multiplies the shadows, and the shadows show up in relief the asperities, crevices, and mazes of a surface which at first had appeared plane and pure. The truth which through the fog of common opinion seemed near recedes from us in proportion as he makes us see it better. Only, in this art of using the intelligence to make the unintelligible—the art of the highly-bred sceptic—Newman is far ahead of us, because this scepticism being in him only a transition, it is much sharper than ours without being co-extensive with human reality. If in connection with some idea Newman enumerates scrupulously the most opposite points of view, if he notes and emphasizes the divergent ways of the mind, it is in order to stress the optical defect which prevents us from perceiving the place in which these points of view are harmonized, where these ways meet and are fused. And how great is our surprise to discover at last that this meeting-place is ourselves, that it is for us to master an anarchy of which we thought we had detected in ourselves the ineradicable and fatal principle! By drawing com-

pletely the ideas which we are only sketching and in going, as it were, at full speed, Newman gives us the feeling that we have not yet made the round of ourselves and that we have not yet been able to rise to our full height. Thereupon an anguishing problem is set: did Newman owe his certitude, born like a spark out of every doubt and every sophism, to the peculiar nature of his faith or else, on the contrary, did the impulsion of his faith make him discover in man an unconditional and unshakable point of certitude? Was he saved from ruin by his God, or did he save himself by seeking his God? On the answer to these questions depend, in my opinion, the shade of our ideal, the legitimate measure of his claims; and I should deem myself happy if at least, in the following pages, I had been able to set it going decently. For I think that it is high time to emerge from the confusion we are in and to attempt to embrace with a single view both the figure of our destiny and the extent of our means.

## I. MYSTERY AND THE INDIVIDUAL

The individual isolated before a mystery, before a mystery accepted as such and piously preserved as

such without the individual's renouncing the exercise of his thought, such is, according to Newman, the highest situation of spiritual life. Remark the two superficially contradictory conditions: the mystery is authentic and complete, the natural result of an incommensurability with the human mind, but the latter never ceases to exert all its power and all its subtlety in the very act whereby it is convinced of its limitations. On the summit of thought are things which we can no longer think with our means; but these means are indispensable for delimiting and affirming what we are unable to conceive. The intelligence does not penetrate mystery, but it leads to it, and by ways testifying to a tireless activity. The difference between the religious instinct and religious thought resides in this, that the former believes without understanding and that the latter understands that one must believe. Such a fundamental relation of thought to mystery is met with everywhere in Newman's work. A power of believing, a will to understand, to both he ensures a full return without ever dreading the fatal encounter and collision. A frank acceptance of the intelligence which plunges into the heart of a moral atmosphere and does not fear

to flash its rays there, which struggles for a given faith in the profound regions of the soul while insisting upon its own absolute exercise of its rights, which on one side evades all snares and on the other multiplies them, guided by a consciousness and a prescience both more and more scrupulously sharpened, such is the rare, and I dare say, the sublime spectacle offered to us by the work of Newman. In him intelligence and faith act as mutual brakes and yet no attentive reader can accuse him of the slightest artifice.[2]

The recognition of mystery is in a way religion at one remove; it supposes a reflection upon a spontaneous, or at least an instinctive, spiritual state, the basis and the stuff of all belief. The simple and categorical truths of revelation, considered one by one, are perfectly suited to this first state of religious life; they are the object of a real assent, that is to say they yield to the imagination

[2] I know well that the rationalist prejudice is so deeply rooted that it is with difficulty that we avoid attributing a gratuitous character to the undertakings of an intelligence which allows itself to be braked by a spiritual activity different from itself. But after all, better to think correctly than obey rationalism where rationalism is not correct. Let us not forget that we are dealing here with problems of concrete philosophy which interest the religious man, the moralist, the artist, the politician, all who think more or less aside from logical reason.

and have an immediate affective influence upon our conduct. But the difficulty begins when we link these truths together. It is easy to retain through a real sentiment each of the propositions composing the dogma of the Holy Trinity, but it is impossible to conceive these propositions as a whole and as forming a system. Nevertheless, we cannot prevent ourselves from attempting the impossible: the intellect is there urging us and insisting upon its rights: 'It is ever active, inquisitive, penetrating; it examines doctrine and doctrine; it compares, contrasts, and forms them into a science; that science is theology.'[3] It is especially when he accepts this tendency of the intelligence, when he observes it, and both orients and dominates it, that Newman's amazing accuracy of mind appears, and also perhaps, his incomparable craft.

His great enemy is also ours, though we do not share his beliefs: I mean, rationalism. And with his admirable tact he stresses the essential objection, doubtless more essential than that which occupies the centre of Bergsonian criticism. Intelligence is narrow and restricted, less restricted than nar-

[3] *Grammar of Assent*, p. 147.

row. It resembles a myopic eye of which the retina is furthermore filled with blind spots. It sees badly and it sees incompletely. Now, what is a revelation? It is the partial elucidation of something. Spiritual realities form a whole, a system of realities which we cannot embrace with one view. We only know bits of them, like a cipher message in which we can only understand a few lines: 'Thus Religious Truth is neither light nor darkness, but both together; it is like the dim view of a country seen in the twilight, with forms half extricated from the darkness, with broken lines, and isolated masses.'[4] What we lack are the lines joining these forms together, the regions in between the lighted masses, the translation of the signs for reconstructing the text. But rationalism ignores all this: a connecting agent and incorrigible mechanic, it fills in the voids and composes a system in order to be able to think mystery according to its own norms; and yet it suppresses mystery without elucidating it so as to solve the so-called contradictions that are only optical errors. Thus certain litterateurs draw

[4] *Essays Critical and Historical*, vol. I, p. 42.

human reality with a rule instead of expressing its ineffable mystery pierced by revelations.

Thus, not only does the intelligence lead to mystery, but in a way it creates it, since, if it is true that without revelation there would be no mystery, neither would there be any were it not for the effort of the mind to understand revelation. Now, I would ask those who would object to me that this theory can only concern philosophers preoccupied with the beyond, that they kindly do what we rarely have the time or the courage to do, that is to say to question themselves upon the degree of coherence and intelligibility of a modern man's entirely human beliefs. And to choose one example out of a hundred, take the moral beliefs relative to man in society, to the lot of our fellows, and to our conception of happiness, such as these have been received by us from our ancestors in the state of instincts. For my part at any rate, when I seize upon myself in full activity and, so to speak, on the wing, when I retire into myself and collect myself as I am without giving me time to arrange myself, I see in myself two forces equally original, equally imperious and apparently incompatible: a

personality which tends to expand infinitely and to which no one can be entitled theoretically to contest this expansion, and a sensibility which has incorporated the sensibility of the rest of mankind, which reacts to their sufferings, sympathizes with their efforts, and makes me weigh in my least deliberations the fate of the human beings, however humble, about me. I might certainly settle this through the rationalist sleight-of-hand trick, compose an intellectually satisfying system, follow Nietzsche or follow Proudhon, or believe myself satisfied with the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen. I might ingeniously conjugate these two forces, either by sacrificing one to the other, or by analyzing them in such a way that they would have the air of being the two aspects of a same spiritual state. I might even imitate certain modern revolutionaries who pretend to have reabsorbed the old humanitarianism in a practical despotism or in a peremptory scientism. But by acting thus I should only substitute an artificial and ineffective system, a rosary of words, for the living whole, for the spiritual landscape the unity of which I have a presentiment without conceiving it, and of which only some 'isolated

masses' extrude in my consciousness. Whereas I prefer—and Newman's meditation incites me to prefer—to accept the illogism of my experience, and believe firmly in the coherence of an ideal of which the connections and details elude me, not because they do not exist, but because my mind has not yet attained to their measure.[5] Here will be perceived the subtle articulation of faith with intelligence. By yielding to its need of combining, the latter most often accomplishes only a clever trick, and, its too large meshes letting a part of reality slip through, everything goes on as if this part did not exist. For faith on the contrary reality is a living whole given to consciousness, propounded by a tradition, acknowledged by experience, approached by hope and will; and this it is which holds together, by a blind and creative effort, all the spiritual data which the intellect dissociates

[5] Certainly entirely terrestrial aspirations can with difficulty be compared to divine realities. But it is nevertheless true that we must accept altogether the whole of these aspirations, not as fancies but as parts of a spiritual whole that we perceive incompletely. The difference between this view and Newman's is that we believe that this mystery, *our* mystery, will be cleared up some day, precisely because it is relative to the things of the earth. In fact, it probably never will be quite thus, but—and here we come upon Newman again—we shall draw indefinitely nearer to the light without ever attaining it. Our desires are messengers bringing to us the order to act.

by considering. 'Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.'

It is quite mistakenly, in my opinion, that Newman is considered by a large number of eminent minds as an anti-intellectualist, or at least as a thinker indifferent enough to the proper value of the intelligence. How can one thus describe a philosopher who makes of the recognition and creation of mystery one of the highest functions of this intelligence, who sees in it the evident signs of its most excellent 'form'? For by suspending its comprehension, it testifies to that suppleness, that freedom, and that complete power over oneself which are met with only in the supreme degrees of a physical or moral training. It truly surpasses itself when it thus allows itself to be surpassed. Newman is an anti-rationalist, that is all that can be asserted, and it is far from meaning the same thing: it means precisely that for him the intelligence is valid only when it faithfully and continuously represents in its undertakings, not only its own aspirations, but further all the other aspirations of the mind.

We touch here upon the second point in Newman's teaching that I should like to stress. I indeed believe that the thing most repugnant to him

was that ideal and impersonal place, dear to the rationalists, where verities come to birth through the application of fixed and peremptory logical rules. Here is an admirable text in which he comments upon Paley's arguments relative to the Evidences of Christianity: 'I confess to much suspicion of legal proceedings and legal arguments, when used in questions whether of history or of philosophy. Rules of court are dictated by what is expedient on the whole and in the long run; but they incur the risk of being unjust to the claims of particular cases. Why am I to begin with taking up a position not my own, *and unclothing my mind of that large outfit of existing thoughts, principles, likings, desires, and hopes, which make me what I am?* If I am asked to use Paley's argument for my own conversion, I say plainly I do *not want to be converted by a smart syllogism;* if I am asked to convert others by it, I say plainly *I do not care to overcome their reason without touching their hearts.*'[6] And this is how Newman replies to those who would pretend to assimilate a living idea to a reasoning: 'An idea under one or other of its aspects grows in the mind by remaining there; it becomes

[6] *Grammar of Assent*, pp. 424-5.

familiar and distinct, and is viewed in its relations; it leads to other aspects, and these again to others; subtle, recondite, original, *according to the character, intellectual and moral, of the recipient;* and thus a body of thoughts is gradually formed *without his recognizing what is going on within him.* And all this while, or at least from time to time, *external circumstances elicit into formal statement* the thoughts which are coming into being in the depths of his mind; *and soon he has to begin to defend them;* and then again a further process must take place, of analyzing his statements and ascertaining their dependence one on another. *And thus he is led to regard as consequences, and to trace to principles, what hitherto he has discerned by a moral perception, and adopted on sympathy; and logic is brought in to arrange and inculcate what no science was employed in gaining.*'[7] In the first of these significant texts Newman affirms his intellectual courage, his will to enlist all the values of the being in the quest for truth. In the second he shows, with his gift of elucidating the least shades of his internal experience, to what extent the birth and development of ideas, of what is most

[7] *Development of Christian Doctrine*, p. 190.

intellectual in us, are independent of pure reason. And it is such texts, hastily read, that have led to the ranking of Newman among the adversaries of intelligence. But what in reality does he claim? To bring into the light of consciousness the totality, one and indivisible, of his spiritual being. To think, for him, is to express, to reason, to cement the data of consciousness, to argue is to defend the riches that one has discovered in oneself. And how speak of the entirely modern spirit—I was going to write, entirely recent spirit—of those lines which Pareto [8] might have signed [9] and which seem to be inspiring

[8] The existence of Vilfredo Pareto (1848-1923) and of Benedetto Croce has been advanced as a sign that Italy is again one of the great countries of the world. Not since the days of Leonardo and Michelangelo, it has been said, has she produced two such men, with Gentile no doubt as the new, philosophic Raphael, to complete the comparison. Whereas Croce is a metaphysician who deems science incapable of furnishing any explanation of things, Pareto was an engineer, a professor of science, with a contempt for metaphysics. His *magnum opus* is the *Trattato di Sociologia generale* wherein he erects a sociology on the lines of a system of mechanics. He discerns four elements or social forces: (1) residues, (2) derivations, (3) interests, (4) social heterogeneity. (1) are instincts, (2) ideologies, (3) are the motive forces of economic action, and (4) leads to the theory of the *élites* in which he had been forestalled by Sorel. Whereas Croce is an opponent of Mussolini, Pareto, with Sorel and Gentile, has been, obviously enough, one of *Il Duce's* major influences. The *Trattato* has not, so far, been translated into English.—*Translator's Note.*

[9] Criticizing them the next moment of course. Pareto, taking the point of view of positive science, was unable to recognize any validity so far as knowledge goes in the theories elaborated according to the process described by Newman. But he was against those especially who think in

Sorel [10] when he exposes 'the claim so often advanced by men of talent to submit to the orders of their discursive intelligence what belongs to his-

this way without having the courage or the intelligence to admit it. He therefore would have had no hold on Newman. It can be seen here—let it be said in passing for the benefit of detractors of 'moralism'—how an intense 'moral' earnestness may become an intellectual factor of the first order.

[10] Every schoolboy should be familiar with the name of Georges Sorel (1847-1922). Yet one may, for example, search the new *Encyclopaedia Britannica* in vain for a line about him. At Leningrad, however, his bust has a place of honour, and in Italy his name is frequently on the lips of Mussolini. For he was, indeed, one of the chief inspirers of both the Bolshevist Revolution of 1917 and the Fascist Revolution of 1922. He modestly considered himself as a commentator of 1° Marx and Proudhon and 2° Bergson and William James. But already before the War he was known as more than that, as the theorist of revolutionary syndicalism and as the philosopher of the 'myth.' Naturally his views cannot be summarized in a paragraph, but it may be said that as an admirer and disciple of Bergson he was the foe of rationalism. Intelligence, he declared with satisfaction, is no longer altogether confused with thought. Really cultured people now have for a belated scientist as much consideration as for a publisher of almanacks. He despised equally 'the nationalism of the eighteenth century' and 'the scientism of the nineteenth.' Especially he hated the doctrine of democracy, his final disillusionment coming after the bitter experience of French political events which followed the Dreyfus case. To the idea of democracy he opposed the idea of the sovereignty of one class. This was for a long time the proletariat. Hence his stimulus to Bolsheviks. Later he became much less of a socialist in that sense. For all the time he was anti-Rousseau, anti-romantic, he considered man as bad or limited, able to accomplish anything of value only thanks to disciplines, ethical, heroic, or political. Thus he came to favour a national combative *élite*. Hence his inspiration for the Fascisti. Sorel led the life of a hermit at Boulogne, a suburb of Paris. Nevertheless he contrived to do a good deal of talking, and his talk, it is said, was far superior to his writings—clearer and more stimulating. His principal books are: *Les Illusions du Progrès* (1908), *Reflections on Violence* (1908), *Introduc-*

torical development'? [11] For those whom Newman has convinced it becomes impossible to combine readymade ideas more or less happily by effecting skilful conceptual dosages. They link the undertakings of their thought to that semi-conscious, affective, moral and intellectual complex which slowly, in the course of their growth and experience, has formed within them. They understand that all reasoning is dependent upon a history, is the putting in order of this history, but that by itself it creates nothing.

And they understand further all the consequences of this spiritual prepossession, consequences of which the bearing cannot be too much emphasized. Consider it carefully indeed, the decision is a grave one, and those who follow Newman here set out upon a perilous path. For once you refuse to obey impersonal reason, that you give up thinking outside of yourself, so to speak, since you intend

*tion à l'Economie Moderne* (1911). *Reflections on Violence* was translated into English by the late T. E. Hulme and published in New York by B. W. Huebsch in 1912, though not until 1916 by Allen and Unwin in London. Hulme was a wholehearted disciple of Sorel, and those interested may be referred to that remarkable volume, his own posthumous *Speculations* (London: Kegan Paul; New York: Harcourt, Brace), wherein his Introduction to his translation is republished.—*Translator's Note.*

[11] *De l'Utilité du Pragmatisme*, p. 144.

to make your aspirations fit into your thought, respond to all the appeals of your soul, you no longer have any other support but yourself, and your personality, in its unity and its originality, becomes the unique and irreplaceable judge of error and truth. Far more: it becomes the unique means of attaining to the true, since it alone is in a position to reduce the imaginary to the real. Such, in my opinion, is Newman's greatest lesson, a lesson at first surprising, but established upon views so right and so profound that soon it convinces us irresistibly.

'There is no medium between using my faculties, as I have them, and flinging myself upon the external world according to the random impulse of the moment, as spray upon the surface of the waves, and simply forgetting that I am.'[12] I cannot think except through myself and for myself, I cannot judge without starting from the very point with which I aim at concluding. I cannot move myself, change myself, substitute for my self another self. Hence it follows that the principles of a doctrine, the premises of a reasoning, the roots of a belief, represent what is most individual in each of us, what is least communicable. The prin-

[12] *Grammar of Assent*, p. 347.

ciples of thought being 'of a personal character, . . . where there is no common measure of minds, there is no common measure of arguments, and . . . the validity of proof is determined, not by any scientific test, but by the illative sense.'[13] Already at the time of the Oxford Movement, in connection with the system of committees proposed by Rose and Palmer, he proclaims his preference for personal action, and we see him inclined to introduce into the judgment of truth, as constituent elements of this judgment, the energy and faith of the person who affirms. It may be said that every page of his work tends to establish that judgment is guaranteed in the last resort by the person, since the mental act whereby we affirm anything adds to the conclusion a certitude which it does not contain, and that this act is provoked by our personal beliefs. It would not therefore be correct to say that, for Newman, the thinker's first duty is to know himself. There is more in his doctrine: *the thinker's first duty is to affirm himself with his beliefs and his personal differences, as the place, measure and instrument of all concrete certitude.* The knowledge of truth isolates each man from all

[13] *Grammar of Assent.*

others, *for he can attain it only at the moment when he is no longer anything but himself.* Few spectacles are more moving than that of Newman discovering for us the principles of his thought: in grave and limpid terms he declares his powerlessness to render them evident, he retires into himself, puts the crowd away from him, his thought unfolds solitary; and the tone of his words, which seem not so much written as pronounced by a voice of which the modulations add to the thought they express, transmits to us through a mysterious sympathy its indemonstrable truth.

Consider whither he leads us: if at the beginning and the end of concrete knowledge we find the individual isolated, this means that certitude exacts beliefs and judgments that alone the individual can furnish. Logical reasoning leads the mind short of certitude, as a road might lead to one side of a ditch when the goal was on the other side: the space remaining to be crossed can be crossed only by the individual, and only with his own means. Concrete assent, which attaches us through the imagination to singular and therefore indemonstrable realities, the faith that sustains, limits and corrects the mechanical play of the intelligence, the

mental act which adds to the probability of reasoning the certitude of conclusion, all these depend on the nature of each one of us. Discursive knowledge is valid to the extent it *expresses* us; but it always stops short at the edge of the ditch. And this is the severe and magnificent conclusion to which this thought naturally leads: if the individual is the essential instrument of certitude, if the first and the last words are reserved for him, we learn thereby that the essence of the individual is belief and judgment. To be is to believe and to conclude; if I neither believe nor conclude, I am not, for to follow the impulsions of the moment, 'simply forgetting that I am,' is not being. Such a thought both consolidates and ennobles individualism. It enables us to see in individualism precisely the contrary of what we believed we saw. It reverses the problem and discovers in the very essence of individualism an inevitable moral obligation.[14] With an audacity revealing the extraordin-

[14] Newman turns his back on Kant at the same time as he reaches conclusions superficially resembling Kant's. The German philosopher Simmel [Georg Simmel (1858-1918?) is the author of *The Philosophy of Gold* and of studies of Kant and Goethe.—*Translator's Note.*] has shown that the Kantian freedom was balanced, and as it were compensated, by the essential identity of individuals. The concrete, qualitative, variable ego depends on the pure ego, deprived of all individual content. When

ary religiousness of his nature, Newman, after having led us to the extreme limits of anarchy, there unveils the principles of à living creative order, supple and infinitely fecund. Upon the spot where the shapeless monotony of the desert was beginning to overwhelm us he summons into existence the promised land.

## II. NOTHINGNESS AND FAITH

A severe and magnificent conclusion no doubt, but perhaps an illusory conclusion. For after all, it may be objected to me, this is all very well, but all this is only artifice. What do we find behind this astonishing philosophy? A believer, a cardinal: a man who rightly or wrongly considered himself in relation with a supernatural world, for whom our least terrestrial realities were transparent and re-

truth is acquired, man can no longer be in contradiction with himself, and he can no longer be contradicted by another. For Newman, on the contrary, the concrete, qualified individual is the pivot of moral knowledge, and his individualism may be said to resemble, *mutatis mutandis*, Nietzsche's rather than Kant's. But, in spite of the isolation of moral knowledge, Newman's thought is turned towards the idea of communion. In barbarous terms: it tends towards an ideal coincidence of the instinct of knowledge and of the instinct of individualization. In this way Newman is more modern, not only than Kant, but also than Nietzsche himself.

vealed a beyond; a priest brought to Catholicism through love of coherent systems and hierarchies, of unity in the historical becoming and of submission to the dogmatic discipline of the Church. Hence his conception of mystery and his theory of assent matter little to us: it may well be said that he was fighting a battle which had already been won in heaven. Certainly his anti-rationalism and his individualism reveal a probity and intellectual finesse unparalleled; but what do they prove if not the excess of his confidence in that beyond which guided and protected him? This *enfant terrible* of religious thought lived the religious life intensely. What would you think of an acrobat carrying out a thousand giddy tricks in the air if you learned that he was supported by an invisible rope? And what would you think of the unfortunate who would hasten to imitate him without having recourse to his artifice? Does not Newman's criticism deliver to nothingness those who do not share his beliefs?

Before replying to this objection, a reply which will conclude this essay, I should like first to set aside another of no small weight. Instead of attributing a positive value to Newman's philosophy,

one might consider it as the hazardous interpretation, still provisional and after all rather gratuitous, of a religious experience calling for an entirely different solution. Newman would have analyzed, discussed, elaborated, doctrines because he possessed an unrivalled intelligence and a remarkable logical faculty; but he himself did not fail to feel the vanity of his reasonings, of all reasoning. In short the only natural solution of the Newman difficulties would be the mystical solution. The mystical experience would be the only one that could legitimately be opposed to rational experience.[15]

[15] This is approximately Mr. Brémond's thesis without the thousand subtle and exact distinctions I am unfortunately compelled to omit. I believe that I remain more faithful than he does to the *literal spirit*, so to speak, of Newman, but the worthiness of his thesis cannot be too much stressed. My justification resides in the fact that Newman's philosophy, interpreted subjectively, reveals a singular originality and admirable fecundity. Moreover, Newman, as he himself recognized, was only an apprentice-philosopher, and on principle not at all systematic, so that his thought may be extended in several different directions. One word more: don't let us go too far with mysticism. We should end by instaurating a sort of concept of mysticism which would be only a distorted rationalism. In faithfully expressing his internal experience, Newman has remained more faithful to the veritable mystic tradition than he would have if he had artificially inflected his thought in the direction of mysticism.

[The Abbé Brémond (born 1867), acquired notoriety through the address he delivered upon his admission to the French Academy in October, 1925, on the subject of 'pure poetry.' This is a pure poetry quite different from Mr. Valéry's and Mr. George Moore's, for from his the

It may be of great advantage for a Catholic to inflect Newman's thought in the direction of mysticism and he is, after all, perfectly entitled to do so. I merely remark that this thought, as it is offered to us in its complexity and its admirable suppleness, would be denatured by such an interpretation. The mystic's sentiment of God resembles the sentiment which each one of us has of himself, the sentiment of a total and single being, as indefinable as recognizable. When the sentiment of God does not present such characteristics, exclusive of all relation because of all abstraction, there is no mystical experience, but there may be a religious experience. I should define the latter, in so far as it is to be distinguished from the mystical experience, as the sentiment of our own person, as it were, maintaining, or being able to maintain, certain relations with God. This, it will be seen, is a difference of centre and of starting-point: in the first case these are God, in the second they are the person; between God and the

Abbé excludes ideas, sentiments, and images, as being impure elements, and lets the poetry consist of a mysterious fluid that he believes can bring the reader into direct communion with God. See his *Prière et Poésie*, &c. But Mr. Fernandez is referring to his book, *Newman: Essai de Biographie psychologique.—Translator's Note.*]

person, there must be a choice. Now Newman's belief is relative to the religious experience, not to the mystical experience.[16] It assumes an interval, however slight, between the mind and its object. It is an attitude, a guidance of the person seizing himself as distinct from God at the moment in which he affirms His existence. In the religious experience there is the sentiment of a being who believes, in the mystical experience there is the sentiment of a being who is. Newman is the philosopher of the religious experience: all his strokes and all his judgments aim at the person who believes in God, not at the one who lives in Him. While the mystic tends to self-forgetfulness, Newman has no surcease, on the contrary, until he has recalled himself to himself, until he has descended and buried himself in himself, since it is in himself that he deciphers the message of his God. But belief implies already, by its mere existence, an inclination of the whole being which fatally carries along thought, so that faith, felt in this fashion, recedes from rather than leads to mysticism. It is

[16] Naturally here I am forcing the differences. Nevertheless all critics familiar with religious writings will recognize a difference of nature between those of authors like St. John of the Cross or of Maria of the Incarnation and those of authors like Newman and Pascal.

true that Newman might believe without thinking; but it is also true that he spontaneously feels the imperious need of thinking his belief.

'Now, if this be Reason, an act or process of Faith, simply considered, is certainly an exercise of Reason. . . . It is an acceptance of things as real, which the senses do not convey, upon certain previous grounds; it is an instrument of indirect knowledge concerning things external to us. . . .' Thus is faith also an authentic act of the mind. Reason starts from the fact, establishes proofs of it, deduces the consequences; faith goes *towards* the fact, *towards* the truth, with all the means at its disposal, without ever attaining them. 'Faith advances and decides upon antecedent probabilities, that is, on grounds which do not reach so far as to *touch* precisely the desired conclusion, though they tend towards it and may come very near it.' [17] Religious thought is marching by a star, but by an invisible star. 'They go out themselves to meet Him who is unseen.' And here again is his leitmotiv: 'They believe on grounds within them-

[17] *Oxford University Sermons*, p. 224. It is worth putting this view beside the celebrated view expounded by Bergson in his *Introduction to Metaphysics*. Remember the convergent conceptual rays and the leap into the void constituting intuition.

selves. . . .' Always the individual, the person with his own riches, his means, his original share. To believe, therefore, is indeed to think, but it is to think rapidly, in the heat and haste of action; and analysis, applied thereafter to finding the reasons and sentiments implied in the act of faith, must be used with extreme prudence. Hence a precaution, and as it were a voluntary timidity, in religious thought: 'This is the true office of a writer, to excite and direct trains of thoughts.' It is both affirmed and restrained, but after all it is restrained only because it is affirmed. All these passages, and many others that we have no space to quote, testify, it seems to me, to two things: that Newman insists upon the subjective factors of belief, on the mental act affirming the invisible reality; *and that, on the other hand, the believing mind seizes itself in reflection as drawing nearer indefinitely to this reality without ever joining it. This means that certitude is nothing else than the mental act itself which by a creative decision surpasses the limit of probabilities.*

But thus, in replying to the second objection, we have at the same time met the first. If we have followed Newman's thought to the end, a meta-

physical nothingness is not enough to upset us, so long, however, as we still feel the need of believing in something. I would even admit that Newman's realism hinders rather than enlightens me. His doctrine of faith will appear paradoxical to many modern minds precisely because it stops short and refuses to develop its true consequences. Newman starts from himself, returns to himself; he sets going the infinitely fecund idea that faith is a mode of thought, an act of the mind; the very traits whereby he defines it make it appear as more or less *creative* of its object; now this object is already created, already believed, already thought, and the believer cannot reconstruct it for his own account, except by throwing frequent glimpses at the picture which he has in front of him, so as to see that he does not err. I know well that these straightenings-up and these glances are the essence of faith; but then why so many efforts, so many subtleties, and all this fine philosophical work? Why, above all, this theory of the believer which can so easily be rendered independent of any orthodoxy, which is indeed truly only comprehensible if it adds something to orthodoxy. With a remarkable critical finesse Mr. Brémond has seen that New-

man could not stay halfway between Catholic realism and the more or less conscious idealism of his doctrine. Realist thought cannot avoid the problem of evidence, and between rational evidence and mystical evidence it would indeed seem that all the ingenuity in the world will not discover a third. Hence the paradoxical spectacle that Newman provides for us of a thought organized around a truth with which it sustains no necessary relation; far more, which is compelled to meet this truth even as it is imposed upon it by revelation and by history. Here faith goes clearly towards thought which cannot then pretend, except through a pure artifice, to any rôle however modest and moderate. For Newman's mystery is only one for the intelligence, it is not one for knowledge: it is given to us like those natural facts that we understand the less since we cannot deny them. All theory of belief relative to a given object, that is to say already *passed*, ends in a dilemma: either simply to duplicate rational thought and thus be dependent upon it, or to justify the acceptance of an order, and simply translate this order into more reflective terms. Read now these last words of Newman's: 'Faith is a process of Reason, in which

so much of the grounds of inference cannot be exhibited, so much lies in the character of the mind itself, in its general view of things, its estimate of the probable and the improbable, its impressions concerning God's will, and its anticipations derived from its own inbred wishes, that it will ever seem to the world irrational and despicable;—till, that is, the event confirms it.' [18] Don't you see, don't you feel, that these words acquire all their bearing only if they mean that belief increases knowledge, surpasses experience, invents, creates? Why cannot the 'grounds of inference' be 'exhibited'? — *Because they do not exist yet.* Why do they not exist yet? Because 'so much lies in the character of the mind itself.' What is the event confirming faith? — It is this faith itself realized, made present, become that past which reason can define and judge. In this case, but only in this case, belief is the mother of thought. In all other cases belief is only a guide and thought only an accomplice.

It seems to me that everything clears up if belief is made the sign of a disposition to create what does not yet exist. We are so weak, so imperfectly weaned from Christianity, that we ill conceive a

[18] *Oxford University Sermons*, p. 218.

belief which would not put us into touch with a present and protective reality; and to deserve this protection we are invariably ready to humiliate ourselves, to empty ourselves of all our substance, to attribute to invisible hands the merit of our own effort. Let us have the courage once and for all to put nothingness back in its true place, reality in its true place, to make ourselves solid, and the void around us. Let us deepen our scepticism until we discover in it the root of our faith. What, as soon as I touch bottom in myself I feel myself led to hope, to will, to believe in a world different from that surrounding me, in a being different from me! But does not this world already exist in my hope, in my will, in my faith? Do not these aspirations which I find only in me reveal a beyond of mine, whether it be my ego of tomorrow, or else the world in which my fellow-men will live tomorrow? Are they not bearers of messages, these feelings assailing me on all sides like the fragrances of a wood in the greatest depth of the night? Have not others already attempted to translate these feelings more or less into ideas, may I not find traces of them everywhere, in books, in men's acts, in their desires? And may I not in turn, and within the limits of my means, carry out a scrupulous recension of the

probabilities thanks to the attentive study of myself and of the objective traces of the past? There, obviously, the intellectual trajectory of my course would have to stop, and the rest of the space to be crossed would have to be crossed by myself, in my own name, under my own responsibility: in the domain of concrete things, to know is to be, to be is to create, to be certain is to accomplish. A dramatic philosophy no doubt, a tension without relaxation and a progress without rest; but a philosophy, as it were, traced over our present experience faithfully interpreted. Those idols which our fathers went seeking so far up, with which they fought battles of love and hate, these are shown by modern reflection prefigured in the mould in our spiritual nature; and our action alone can confer on them the volume and the independence of real beings. Is it not admirable and singular that Newman's voice, as it recedes from us, should make us understand more and more clearly, and recommend to us in a language more and more familiar, that 'trial of Faith, which alone overcomes the world'? [19]

[19] The above essay, as already stated, appeared originally in *The Criterion*. In *The New Criterion* for October, 1926, Mr. Fernandez published a reply, translated by Mr. F. S. Flint, to certain objections

raised by Mr. Frederic Manning against the original essay. As this reply completes the essay, one or two passages are subjoined:

Contrary to the rationalist and the mystic, Newman, before God and before Reason, declares himself responsible for his faith. It is this responsibility, this necessity which he felt to acknowledge his personal differences, this heroism of faith, that I admire in Newman. Is it a betrayal of the 'historical conscience' to claim that this heroism is independent of any particular creed, and to offer it as an example to the men of our time who live the life of the mind?

I grant Mr. Manning that it is the Newman inspired by Coleridge I invoked. My essay is thus incomplete. I recognize this and add that such was my intention. But is it partial? I must dispute this point.

It appears that the originality of Newman among religious thinkers lies in his reserving and defining, in face of theology, of dogmatic creed, the modes of living thought, of personal certainty, which in no way coincide with rational logic and certainty. It is true that he bases his personal certainty on the dogmatic proposition, but since he distinguished between the two, since he set a space between the dogma and the believer, since certainty is an act of the believer and not an evidence of the dogma, one is apt to think that a believer in another creed, without modifying in the least Newman's way of being certain, might give quite another object to his certainty. . . . If he (Newman) is right, as I believe he is, his Catholicism passes into the background, and his analyses are valid for all belief. I would even add that they imply a multiplicity of beliefs.

Catholic realism, with its doctrine analyzed down to its most delicate relationships, with its fixed imagery, reduces the value and scope of this concrete thought so admirably defined by Newman, and makes of it a secondary function of abstract thought and of memory. That is the reason for my claiming that the fideism of Newman, if it is to be truly coherent, autonomous and positive, must imply that the believer creates the object of his belief.

# VIII

# THE INTELLIGENCE AND MR. MARITAIN

# VIII

## THE INTELLIGENCE AND MR. MARITAIN[1]

TO THE young man of goodwill in search of a splendid subject I would suggest a history, that of the vicissitudes—and why not of the vices?—of modern intelligence. We now find insipid our fathers who pushed Reason on to its incline, forcing themselves with naïveté to remove the obstacles which would have hindered its course. Then, a man desirous of ensuring that his brain

[1] The name of Mr. Jacques Maritain must inevitably be associated with the 'ordered offensive of Thomism' at present taking place in France. He is the general commanding. A convert from Protestantism like Newman, he is now a professor at the Catholic Institute in Paris. For him Thomism is *the* philosophy of Christianity, *i.e.*, if you are a Christian, you must be a Thomist; you must consider yourself as under the spell of Original Sin; in short, bad; and able to accomplish anything of value only thanks to a discipline, a discipline which the Catholic Church will provide. He began as a critic of Bergsonism. He went on to attack Catholics of the colour of the late Maurice Barrès, the author of *Le Culte du Moi.* His watchword is: An End to Subjectivism. He demands, in other words, a return to the external loyalties. For a simple account of precisely what this means, see T. E. Hulme, *Speculations*, the essay entitled: Humanism. Mr. Maritain's chief books are: *Introduction Générale à la Philosophie, Anti-Moderne, Réflexious sur l'Intelligence, Trois Réformateurs,* and *Art et Scolastique.*. Some have been translated into English.—*Translator's Note.*

should work at its best set for himself a heroic and delectable task: he isolated himself, withdrew himself, obliterated things around himself in order thereafter to re-create them slowly, idea by idea, according to the necessary but miraculous links of intelligibility. Solemn obsequies of the imagination, fitting into consciousness of the levers of the Universe! That more or less criticial idealism which makes things dependent either on the structure or the activity of the mind, became the purest method of human intelligence; for it was thought impossible to understand without constructing, without intellectually 'remaking' the object.

How the idealist orgies provoked a panic is familiar, as also the sudden timidity with which intellectualism took refuge in science, to come out again only rarely, and furtively, although supplied with properly made-out passes. The fantastic picture which certain philosophers drew for us of a scientific work that they did not in the least know will also be remembered. It was the era of the positivist fairy-play, the god Object replacing the goddess Reason on the dais, and all around were the pince-nez of the Levites among which flashed elegantly Mr. Paul Bourget's monocle.

One cannot imagine anything more hypocritical than objectivism, for, in making of the mind a soft paste on which things are impressed, it attributes to things a part of the mind's qualities; by dissimulating the mind's share in the making of the world, it appears to take by force what it persists, in fact, in imposing: such is the way of certain women, clever at disguising their questions as answers; of those burgesses who cling to their money, not because they enjoy it, but because, so they say, the eternal laws of society must be obeyed.

That a religious philosophy should be successful seems natural at a time when pure reason is honoured only by the modest iconoclasts of the University, while the masquerade of pure fact cannot fail to shock the informed. Indeed, to the processions of the intelligence protected by a line of police against the irruption of facts, a strict discipline of the beyond opposes the exciting difficulties which reason must number each time it wants to allow itself to be surpassed correctly; and the striking apologetics of a Duhem,[2] or the ex-

[2] Pierre Duhem (1861-1916), was a French Roman Catholic who for twenty years was professor of pure physics at the University of Bordeaux. A disciple of the American Gibbs, he was a founder of the science of thermo-dynamics. But he went far beyond the properly scientific domain.

quisite experience of a Poincaré,[3] furnish such a discipline with well-tried arms against a worthless and underhand scientism. In the wall of the fortress a breach has been made, and through this the army of the passions is plunging. Excellent. But here is Mr. Maritain perched on the shoulders of St. Thomas, who calls everything in question again. Far from enlarging this breach, he claims to block it up, and passes from the state of besieger to that of besieged. Thomism alone, he tells us, has the right to lead intelligence, it alone will reconstruct the true perspectives of the mind. The apologists who want to play tricks on reason by betraying reason betray their faith, for the defence of Catholicism is the same thing as the apology of the intelligence. All that is needed is agreement on words.

A prolific writer, he produced a history of cosmogonies from Plato to Copernicus in five volumes, a study of Leonardo da Vinci in three volumes, &c. Further, he was a philosopher. He called himself an apostle of common sense. He reconciled his religion with science by evolving various theories, one of which was that, as scientific theories grow more perfect, their logical order comes that much nearer to being a reflection of the ontological order. In particular he attacked the English physicists from Newton onwards. He found that of Pascal's definition of the two types of mind, that of the wide mind as distinguished from the logical mind, furthermore, the wide, but weak, mind, was an accurate description of the typical English mind. See his book, *La Théorie physique, son Objet, sa Structure.—Translator's Note.*

[3] This refers to *Science et Méthode*, chap. III.—*Translator's Note.*

Excellent. I do not know what is thought of Thomism by those who are making a relative success of it in the reviews and in the salons; for this success Henri Massis, Mr. Maritain's brilliant disciple, is perhaps more responsible than his master; but I know well enough that one would not talk so much today about St. Thomas if his disciples had not during their noble sudden attack, taken advantage of that mixture of intellectual excitability and philosophical laziness characterizing the modern mind. Just now I alluded to the vices of our intellect: it requires nothing less than a complete inversion of reason to explain how Thomism should pass, at present and with good minds, for a doctrine of the intelligence. This phenomenon well deserves that one should pause a little to consider it.

Here I open a parenthesis which I dare think will not be a digression. Although I despair of convincing some excellent minds to whom all definition, that is to say any intellectual undertaking, is repugnant, I nevertheless venture to believe that we have reached a point in our evolution when, in the order of ideas, one must either submit or rise up, give up thinking altogether or resign oneself to think to the bitter end. We have contracted the

bad habit of treating ideas as sensations, mixing their dry branches with the flowers of our pleasure, using them as one does those decorative figures which are carved according to the aesthetic conventions of the day. However, these phantoms of ideas, vague phosphorescences which spangle our consciousness and do not light it up, have been so well associated by us with all our experiences that we can no longer draw a line without at once evoking them. Must one, then, make the best of this vaporous state, continue to conceive, so to speak, on the surface of ideas? I do not think so. If, thanks to the confusion of styles, and also to the lack of doctrinal stability, some obscure perspectives should open up now behind the slightest conception, yet to enjoy such obscurity is to confound the highest human pleasure with a cheap optical effect. More than ever our meagre happiness is dependent on the good orderliness of our mind, on our ability to 'hold' in the face of our thought. And by the same token the success of Messrs. Maritain and Massis can to some extent be explained by the now widespread need for submitting to a strong intellectual discipline all these wild thoughts, at times ideas, at other times instincts.

But Mr. Maritain offers to us a dangerous discipline. A doctrine of the intelligence—so are we made—should be the result of a creation; precisely, the achievement of the intelligence. Now Thomism is the work of a thought already terminated, a conception that has looped the loop. It links up, frames, and dominates problems which are not those we are anxious to solve. In its happy effort to conjoin the divine teaching and human experience of its time, it had to have recourse to means which have since lost their effectiveness. In offering Thomism to us as a modern metaphysic, Mr. Maritain is offering to us a metaphysic incommensurable with modern experimental intelligence, *because it does not belong to the same spiritual baking.* It is an accompaniment composed for a melody entirely different from the one our intelligence is playing to us. You perceive the complexity of the problem which Mr. Maritain must unravel: naturally there can be no question of modifying the accompaniment; but Mr. Maritain has too much science and too much tact to dream of modifying the melody; a sliding therefore becomes inevitable and it must prevent his doctrine from 'doing' perfectly. Neo-Thomism

will come through the trial in the sense that it will appear to us as a *possible* explanation of the Universe; but it will have become much less interesting because it will not be inevitably associated with the problems in which our intelligence is interested.

In support of these remarks, here is an example which seems to us significant. Having to conciliate his doctrine with the autonomous and triumphant activity of modern science, Mr. Maritain chooses the following bias: He begins by distinguishing—to save them from a historical wreck—the 'first principles of the order of sensible nature' and the empirical study of 'the immediate causes of phenomena.' The search for first principles makes it possible to attain 'in the sensible . . . the intelligibility of the being.' The search for immediate causes, empirical and far below the other in dignity, 'remains crepuscular' and makes it possible 'just merely to interpret experience as it were gropingly.' Very good. Now, how did the Ancients set about it? They thought that empirical physics 'aspired' to natural philosophy—that of first principles—'in which the mind alone—but in ignoring the details of phenomena, in considering only very universal reasons—begins truly to satisfy its desire for *know-*

*ing.*' This is why they took an interest in experimental science 'especially from the point of view and for the service of philosophy,' for the intelligence 'misses its end if it is ordered to anything else but what is.' They were content to take from nature 'whole views formulated in the general maxims summing up the experience of the sages,' which Mr. Maritain, for that matter, deems 'fundamentally incapable of supplying a determined causal relation and of explaining the details of any phenomenon.' Whence the famous errors of scholastic science.

You see the sliding occurring. Thomism still indeed accompanies science, but at a distance which I dare to call respectful; and for the accompaniment to be justified, true knowing *must* be the science of Being; that is to say a finalism altogether foreign and altogether *useless* to experimental science. Consistent with himself, Mr. Maritain considers that mathematical physics, excellent as an instrument of measuring, played a detestable rôle when it took advantage of the experimental negligences of the great scholastics and their successors to usurp the place of natural philosophy and behave as the Bonaparte of metaphysics.

I will grant to Mr. Maritain that certain illustrious philosophers, in spreading their construction of the Universe over mathematical physics alone, have singularly narrowed our horizon. Nevertheless, when I try to represent to myself their state of mind, I see that they worked upon intelligence still in fusion, upon the still living and blinding product of a series of intellectual efforts; that in these conditions they could not avoid—and did not indeed avoid—gathering essential truths, continuing in their way the work of creation, of laboratory *invention*. Precisely I meet traces of this invention, this tension of the mind which draws up from its depths the *new* light which it sheds over the world, in all the works which appear to me to mark a real victory of the intelligence, whether they be the theories of relativity, *Matter and Memory*, a picture by Cézanne, or the books of Marcel Proust. These traces are not met with—traces marking so profoundly the thought of a Duhem or a Maurice Blondel [4]—in Thomist philosophy considered as a *present-day* interpretation of experience. It appears to us as a harmonious and perfect frame, but

[4] Mr. Maurice Blondel, professor of Law at Aix-en-Provence, is an author coming into vogue in France. His two principal books are *L'Action* and *Le Problème de la Mystique.—Translator's Note.*

so great is the play between this frame and what we have to frame that we perceive at once that it has not been made to order.

It is not our fault if we remain incorrigible fitters, if for us an intelligent act is a creation, not an imperfect reminiscence, if it is manifested to us through a strong adherence of the object to the matter elucidated. The habits of four centuries have made of us workmen, inventors, people who believe that they enlarge the field of consciousness each time they render something intelligible. We are advancing step by step in a narrow circle of light which is not always displaced to suit us, between the chiaroscuro of the past and the night of the future. Often our ill-timed haste makes us stumble in the blackness; often we hang back in the dimness of yesterday's twilight; but the little luminous spot, which moves, which advances when one of us succeeds—after how much effort!—in making flash a clarity, such is intelligence, and our joy then, our fascination, the enthusiasm with which we would exchange all that we have learned from others for the possibility of producing in our turn the very smallest spark, such are the pleasures proper to intelligence. Whence do we deem the

mental click of even a slight discovery in the 'details of phenomena' far above the well-oiled cogs of a system which assumes the complete intelligence of a universe we know only partially? Let not Mr. Maritain accuse us of pride: we have never been more humble; only we relate the imperfection of our intelligence to its least future imperfection, whereas he links it to the intemporal perfection of an Intelligence of which ours would be only the poor reflection. He places behind us, or above us, the light which we catch sight of far ahead. That the *understood* exists, in so far as it is *understood*, before the reaction of our limited intelligence, that our intellection is only the more or less unsuccessful imitation of an Act eternally pure, is something that we can no longer admit, not owing to routine or prejudice, but just because it has become *technically* unthinkable.[5]

Where shall we find reasons powerful enough to break with our intellectual habits in order to devote ourselves to a science of Being which we are

[5] Mr. Maritain has done me the honour of quoting me (No. 5 of *Le Roseau d'Or*), declaring 'strictly void' the argument claiming that Thomism is unthinkable. This 'argument' is the whole of Nominalist criticism which there was no question of summing up here. This article is a profession of faith, not a dialectical discussion.

not quite sure is not a science of words? Must one call upon the eminent dignity of a total view of the Universe, of a just and harmonious distribution of the ends of man here below? Or else must one rely upon the eagerness to accord the intelligence with our mystical aspirations? Then clearly the intelligence is being confused, in the former case with the aesthetic sense, in the latter with the moral and religious sense, and in both with the social sense. Far from offering the intelligible to us, these views should be verified by the intelligence, and instead we have imposed upon us a logic and a vocabulary over which intelligence has lost all control. Nothing can be more timely now than to complete the intelligence, and in a sense to surpass it; but it is shuffling the cards to pretend that it is sovereign beyond its frontiers.

# IX

# NOTES ON THREE ASPECTS OF MODERN THOUGHT

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## (A) ON FREUD[1]

In England at the beginning of the century there was a popular ballad about the Darwinian theory which scrupulously reviewed the comical results of our simian origin; it is probable that poor Fortugé, if death had not prevented him, would have sung today something about the love-affair of a baby and its nurse. Hitherto, however, the public's responses to the works of Freud have often been aggressive, witness Mr. Bonardi's article in the *Ère Nouvelle,* which gives the pitch for general hilarity and indignation. Scientific doctrines which treat of subjects involving ordinary experience are immediately translated into ordinary language. It is therefore in ordinary language (since, further, a technical analysis of the

[1] A review in the *Nouvelle Revue Française,* 1923, of a translation by Dr. Reverchon, of the *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality.*

*Three Essays* would be out of place here) that what general culture owes to the work of Freud on sexuality should be recalled:

Freud has enriched our notion of psychological *materialism:* thanks to him the series of *shameful* causes of a pathetic, or noble, or simply human, sentiment is introduced into consciousness; there will still be many changes in principle and in detail: the essential is that Freud has perfected the psychologist's instrumentation, by affording to him the means of working with a complete freedom of mind. The consequences of such a fact are incalculable. In those circles most important for the progress of culture, it will no longer be possible to obey the commands of what Pareto called the religion of sexuality. Jacques Rivière is perfectly right in saying that henceforth novelists will not be able to disregard the sexual situation of their characters, even as after Balzac, they were unable to disregard their pecuniary situation. And, indeed, did not the story of Master Roguin's nose already lend itself to the most wonderful repressions?

The attentive reader of the *Essays* will not fail to perceive one of Freud's most precious gifts to

modern thought: I refer to his conception of sexual development as a history, and of puberty as a drama. Certainly his history is rather a philosophy of history, and the intelligent audacity with which he defines the sexual phases and their succession in time recalls the heroic age of men like Vico and Hegel. This heroic age was followed by a positive age which introduced new methods, but not a new spirit. Future psychologists will go back over the details, correct the facts; they will doubtless not much modify the Freudian theory of puberty. Puberty, according to Freud, is like a crossroads where the different sexual tendencies which have shown themselves during childhood are both confronted and made to collaborate. For normal sexuality to ensue, these tendencies must not be neutralized, they must be situated and ordered in relation to the properly genital sexuality. Perversion occurs only when one of them fixes a pregenital period to the exclusion of the others. The normal sexual instinct is therefore a centred instinct. The pervert is an eccentric. But he is also a child, an ill-grown one, an unripe fruit which will not ripen.

Impossible, after Freud, to enroll—according to

the example of certain romantics and a fair number of decadents—perverts and inverts in a superb crusade of the mind against nature. Perverts are not rare or isolated, their name is legion. The parks are filled with little innocent perverts and the streets with grown semi-conscious perverts. Perversion is the normal state of the most *natural* age. On the contrary, normal love, the result of a difficult integration of the sexual tendencies, marks the always risky achievement of a fragile balance which must incessantly be restored. Here is one of Freud's great merits: the famous normal state, which we believed triumphant in averages, is shown by him to be the conclusion of a truly vital drama of which this state is the happy issue only if physical, moral, and social circumstances are particularly favourable. This is to introduce a germ of idealism into the representation which we form of it; it is giving an epic value to the conquest of normality.

I have had to borrow Freud's language to sum up a part of his *message* for philosophy, or rather for modern moralism. Probably this language will be modified, and even there will be substituted for it some other, richer, less stiffened by evident de-

liberateness. Freud has had a rather singular philosophic adventure: on the one hand, all the effectiveness of his thought is closely dependent upon his intuitions of sexual life, often profound and original; and on the other hand, he is reproached with reason for his Libido's lack of sexual specificness, the monopoly of this Libido being extended over far too many tendencies. This is a rather frequent flaw in experimental doctrines which experiment does not succeed in remedying, and that philosopher-scientists are led to make up for as best they can with abstract reasonings. Freud himself recognizes that psycho-analysis is 'not yet able to distinguish clearly the subjective Libido from the other energies which act in the Ego.' He concludes from this that one can at present seek a theory of the Libido only by the speculative method; but speculative reasoning is an excellent vehicle for the fixed idea. Claparède's criticism seems irrefutable: a psychic fact cannot be said to be sexual unless it is in relation with the genital functions. When Freud tells us, in connection with insensible young brides, that in them filial love 'is an infantile fixation of the Libido,' evidently he is guilty of a paralogism. Apart from the concomitance of

filial feeling and conjugal coldness being far from demonstrated, it does not follow that because an insensible wife displays an extraordinary filial sensibility, her sexual life must be fixed and, as it were, wedged, in a pre-genital form. Certain extremely plastic women are very sensitive to sentimental surroundings. Often their instinct is not developed until after a whole set of representations, habits, and feelings, has crystallized around the sexual act. Freud's example proves simply that such a crystallization has not taken place, and if a scapegoat were required, I should in many cases propose to absolve the father and condemn the husband.

Much might be said regarding the nostalgic character of puberty as Freud describes it. The view is splendid, but the interpretation disputable. There again he distorts a profound intuition by a forced reasoning. In the same way, when he remarks that many male inverts have been brought up by persons of their own sex, he unfortunately neglects to add that a great number of these inverts have never become sentimentally detached from their mothers, to whom they devote a religious and passionate cult.

What makes me think, further, that the Freudian theory of sexuality cannot long avoid a serious refusion is that its two poles, the treatment of

hysteria and the scheme of the relations of the conscious to the unconscious, seem unable to withstand contemporary scientific criticism. Hysteria has passed into the state of a myth in the eyes of numerous psychiatrists, and some go so far as to contend that it cannot be defined. As to Freud's theories regarding the unconscious, these are bound up with the definition of consciousness current in psychology a score of years ago. Now—and thanks partly to Freud's own work—it seems that this definition is inadequate. To modify it is to modify at the same time that of the unconscious. An excellent bringing-up-to-date of the question will be found in Russell's fine book: *The Analysis of Mind*. The frequent fate of true-bred philosophers: Freud will have no doubt contributed to shake his doctrine by the very penetration of his analysis which has convinced us that between the individual's spontaneous tendencies and the indelible signs of action, consciousness is a connecting agent often unfaithful, always inadequate.

P. S.—Some people having asked me for explanations on the subject of this note, I have thought it opportune to add the following comments:

a) *On the Ideal Character of Normality.* It

is certain that we can no longer start from the normal as from a solid and *given* basis which only a few would fail to agree with. Normality, which might be defined as an accord of the subjective and the objective in a given action, is at first in us only in the state of tendency, a tendency the realization of which is as much dependent upon our *intention* as upon circumstances. It would be possible, thanks to this interpretation of Freudism —corroborated, by the way, by the convergent lines of modern thought—to constitute a positive philosophy of normality. — The latter rejoins the constituent values of the being *beyond* our starting-point, in that zone which can be attained only by the conjugated efforts of life and thought. Do the grave people whom Freud renders indignant, realize that, far more effectively than themselves, he is working for the triumph of a new stoicism, far more supple but no less noble than the other, the stoicism of wisdom and of the essential balance of man?

b) *On a New Conception of Consciousness.* Consciousness has sustained during the last hundred years some masterly offensives. It may even be said that the problem of reality, as much in

the domain of sociology (historical materialism) as in that of psychology (unconsciousness and personality) and of psychiatry (Freudism), is now one with that of consciousness. The Freudian conception, which is after all only a mythology of healing without any properly positive value, arose from the general thesis, very fashionable twenty-five years ago, of an explanation of man by his past. Now we incline rather to explain him by his future. I make myself clear: those who have acquired the conviction that man attains being only in the affirmation of self seek the latter's point of consciousness in his constituent activity. Human action, understood in a precise sense which need not be defined here, becomes the veritable consciousness of pre-active mental states. The Freudian conception, akin to that which I have just sketched, has the defect of not sharply distinguishing between the normal and the pathological, normal action, a pure synthesis, integrating its determinism; that is to say, being an action free and creative.

## (B) WALTER PATER

Pater's sentence is a scrupulous wash, and I would

dare to say a punctilious cleansing of his thought. By discreet, almost abstract colourations—sometimes, it seems, rather too much diluted—it brings out the value of precise connections; with a silversmith's cleanliness it polishes the most hidden recesses as the most salient parts, of the idea, all the aspects of the sentiment and vision of which it patiently chisels. This withdrawal of Pater's thought, which his words present to you as behind a veil, is not to be attributed to any vague poetic, to any numbing of his consciousness: one meets with few styles more analytical than his, more anxious to align and build up the elements of an idea within the space of language, by a knowing distribution of commas pricked here and there with virtuosity, like those pins with the help of which an able workwoman brings to birth out of a formless stuff a valuable dress. Here indeed is a style in which thought is never in the least telescoped! Pater might rather be said to multiply the sections of the telescope; but, by the exquisite adjustment of the word to the idea, by the musical flow of syllables, the Saxon roughness of which seems to have melted, by brief halts arranged in the right places, he supports us in the rather hard ascent of his sentence

towards the rounded terms forming its summit. He uplifts us, I should say; for he gives the impression that the different clauses of this sentence are situated, according to their grammatical value, at different levels, and that having started from the solid basis of the subject, it carries off the thought over appositions, suspends it above the relatives, lets it slide over the subordinates, finally to let it drop, at the end of so many aerial evolutions, upon the second half of the principal which gives to it its definitive seating. Sometimes this fall occurs in the middle of the sentence, and assumes the value of a pose; but most often it coincides with the fall of the period, and, by the brevity of the judgment which it enunciates, is distinguished by the ample and rather groping movement which precedes even as it terminates it, like the *explicit* of the Latin manuscripts of the Middle Ages. It is this suspension of the affirmation, this way of attracting and repelling judgment, as with the rhythmic and minute gestures of a holy service, which renders Pater's sentence so precious and makes of it an exquisite modulation of thought.

Such a perfection must have inconveniences: thought becomes a cult of which style is the

liturgy, a temple of which it is the architecture. The capacity of the style is measured upon that of the thought, but because it contains the latter, it restrains it, it becomes its unique representative, it monopolizes it. It can no more be distinguished from it than the notes can be distinguished from the musical composition which confers artistic existence upon them. If we wish to meditate upon such or such an opinion of Pater's on Plato's doctrine, we must link up afresh the words expressing it, whereas a philosopher would have wedged in our consciousness once and for all the mechanism of his reasoning; if we wish to represent to ourselves the Sparta he describes to us, we must go through his sentences, whereas an artist would have taken us directly through the streets of the city. The rôle of the grand style seems to me, on the contrary, to be to suppress all intermediary between idea and idea, judgment and judgment, vision and vision, and thus to suppress oneself in so far as one is an intermediary consciously perceived. And when I see the style of Sainte-Beuve, the grafter of culture, advancing on tiptoe, stumbling, picking itself up, and anxious above all not to drop the idea, dislocating its periods in order to retain it, I feel my-

self nearer the rough tufa of the intelligence than in reading the most profound pages of Pater's. In both cases there are scruples, adjunctions, supplements, but in the Port-Royal the sacred dance with its finished movements is replaced by the risky, groping, progressive gestures of the mechanic-fitter.

Do not let us, however, force our judgment. It is important to distinguish in Pater's work the critic's share from the aesthetician's share, although the task is not easy. The appraiser of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Plato, has enriched European literature with irreplaceable pages wherein thought soars above style as a jumper soars above the springboard: pages of a high deportment, a grave impartiality, an erudition made supple through the gymnastics of taste. Applying the method which he so well defines in the preface to *The Renaissance*, he constructs with it intellectual equivalents for his sensations. With *criticism-metaphors*, with cycles of thought released by the strong spring of the impression, he envelops the latter with concentric intellectual lines, he elucidates it, erects and orders it on the plane of consciousness. Let us recall the exquisite lines of *Marius the Epicurean* in which Pater compares Lucretius's poetry to thunder and

lightning some distance off, one might recline to enjoy, in a garden of roses; and for an example of evocatory criticism subtly put together, I refer the reader to the admirable pages on virile art concluding *Plato and Platonism*, pages which might worthily crown, purifying it and lighting it up with an inner light, Aristophanes's dialogue of the Just and the Unjust. The intelligence here is duplicated by a plastic sense so happy and so sure that Sainte-Beuve's essays of evocation appear in comparison very thin and very heavy. Here is a rare mastery in the painting of the most diverse spiritual landscapes, a painting impregnated with justice.

But as soon as I go beyond this first zone and penetrate behind Pater into the hidden region, difficult of access, into which each of us goes to find by the light of thought—alas, very often gropingly—the real figure of life, suddenly I hesitate, and I lose confidence, and a secret instinct forbids me to trust to the gaze of the master with whom I had so joyously taken the first steps. As soon as he passes from artistic thought to life, or that he links life to artistic thought, or that he lets or believes he lets, life flow into him, everything in me rears and is upon the defensive.

Pater welcomes joyfully in *Amiel's Journal* the successful results of an 'intellectual effort' for attaining 'the secret, the precise motive, of pleasure' (here of the pleasure of beholding a landscape), for *defining*—Pater underlines—feelings and sensations. This is because for Pater such an effort was the very start-off of the intelligence, and he took part in that way in the great work of re-creating the consciousness, which, from Newman to Marcel Proust, passing through the most dissimilar minds, constitutes the specific character of the modern age. But when one closely examines both the sensible manner he seeks to elucidate and the method of elucidation he applies, one discovers two orders of characteristic correspondences in the elaboration of his intuition and his thought. Through the first correspondence, clearly defined repeatedly (vide notably *Marius*, pp. 87-88; *Plato*, pp. 331-332), Pater declares possible the sentimental and ethical translation of abstract ideas and the *sensible* translation (forms, harmonies of sounds) of the sentimental states, so that the clever contemplation of certain aesthetic wholes puts us in communication with the emission-centre of ideas, and that the contemplation of ideas links us to the resonance-zones of sensible expe-

rience. The second correspondence is limited to rendering possible the apprehension of the first in the indivisible moment of intuition and is to be distinguished from it only because it is implied in the immediate experience of a cultivated individual: it is life's response to analysis. Hence it follows that Pater's focus of vision is situated behind the normal focus, at the point where the sensible rays, the intellectual rays, converge with the rays, the waves rather, which, difficult to define, emanate from erudition and history well assimilated. His intuition is at one remove, it is an elaborated intuition which becomes transparent to the intelligence only because it is formed of an alloy in which intelligence predominates. Hence the importance in Pater of 'second thoughts,' the *arrière-pensées* which confer upon life its definitive shade; hence his tendency to give to all experience the form of a *picture* constructed according to the rigorous and subtle equations of art. Because the beautiful for Pater is, as it were, the sentimental projection of a synthesis of all human powers elaborated and sublimated by culture.

But thereupon a grave question arises of its own accord: isn't this an aesthetic deviation of life,

analogous to the intellectual deviation of which Samuel Butler has given us the most striking expression? Pater's *life as beauty*, Butler's *life as problem* both imply a conception of experience which distorts experience and therefore life, and therefore the intelligence in so far as it thinks life. A *picture* of life assumes that one is just enough disinterested from life to suspend its becoming, but that one is not detached enough from it to renounce introducing into action its values aesthetically sublimated.[2] Pater did not solve Nietzsche's problem: *he did not allow the mind to escape from itself to gain a booty really conquered.* This impotence to distinguish vital intuition from aesthetic intuition will not help the influence in our dramatic age of that grave, that delicate, that religious, Plato of the soul-states.

### (c) THE CLASSICISM OF T. S. ELIOT

At a time when sentimentalism, vainly contended with, still triumphs in misleading disguises, the American poet, T. S. Eliot, offers to us a severe,

[2] I am alluding of course to Oscar Wilde's famous theory that art becomes life, persons modelling themselves upon a picture or a story. A great part of our twentieth-century literature is dominated by this confusion of art and life.

sane, and authentic classicism which Frenchmen will not meditate unfruitfully.[3] Eliot is neither a critical poet nor a poetical critic: he is a poet who analyzes the atmosphere in order to purify it. I know of few appraisers better endowed than he is: an incisive, courageous intelligence, ever dissatisfied with itself, anxious both to limit itself and to feel the tufa of the realities it is considering; a vast and comprehensive culture (besides Greek, Latin, and the novo-Latin languages, he is familiar with Sanscrit and Pali); strong traditional reactions against which he has doubtless had to struggle in order to conquer himself—such are the titles qualifying him for the infinitely perilous task of dissipating cloudiness and redressing the wrongs of the mind. — Some clumsy essays have put us on guard in France against such attempts; but Eliot's thought is of a quality compelling the attention and often winning the assent of the reader. It moves in the pure region of ideas, its aesthetic value is incontestable; finally, alive, incessantly correcting itself, it ranks among the thoughts with a future. And indeed the sketch which I am going to attempt of it will

[3] The critical works by Eliot which I have consulted are: *The Sacred Wood* (London: Methuen; New York: Knopf); *Homage to John Dryden* (The Hogarth Press); *Four Elizabethan Dramatists* (*The Criterion*, February, 1924).

be entirely provisional and will not seek to do more than fix a few essential and permanent traits.

Like all critics of romanticism, Eliot first and foremost attacks the primate of affective life. A pure emotion is a pure nothingness. Now, from all production formerly described as modern, whether a poem, philosophic treatise, or scientific doctrine, there arose an emotional fog which alone held the reader's attention. So long as the latter was ravished, put into ecstasy, that did the trick, the author had accomplished his task, and little did it matter whether the cause of this affective state was a thought or a vision. Furthermore, in mingling the effects of the vision, proper to the work of art, and the effects of thought, proper to the philosophic work, a reinforcement of the emotional stimulant was obtained, whence resulted both an increase of the ecstatic pleasure and the complete confusion of its object. Thus were Bergson's 'art' and Claudel's 'thought' lauded to the skies. — So far, nothing appears to distinguish Eliot's thought from that of Mr. Lasserre [4] and of Mr. Benda: [5] the same horror of little-jerk mysticism,

[4] Mr. Pierre Lasserre is the author of that stimulating book, *Le Romantisme français.—Translator's Note.*

[5] Mr. Julien Benda (b. 1867) has published several books in which he attacks contemporary French society for its lack of real thought, its

the same rational anxiousness for redistribution and putting things straight. But in this question of classicism, as in the Eastern Question, one must consider a near and a far zone, a classicism which can seem such only because it is enough akin to romanticism to be distinguished from it, and a pure, radical classicism, a sharply specific way of thinking and way of feeling. Eliot's great merit consists in the intellectual ardour and precision with which, soaring above the mean and temperate regions,[6] he defines the summits of classicism, viz the analysis of Aristotle and the vision of Dante, which he considers with reason to be the eternal forms of criticism and poetry.

A precise example—everything that Eliot formulates is almost anguishing in its precision—will reveal his manner to us. Given the problem of Hamlet, that *pons asinorum* of international criticism. Some of Shakespeare's admirers (Eliot at any rate, and with him, I admit, the present writer) give way before *Hamlet;* this extraordinary

distrust of reason. He condemns impressionism as effeminate. The first of these books was *Mon Premier Testament* (1910). *Belphégor*, which, it has been said, reveals him as a kind of French Matthew Arnold, was what really made his name.—*Translator's Note.*

[6] These regions, however, he knows very well, witness his remarkable study of Dryden.

work leaves them ill satisfied. Why? Because, Eliot tells us, 'the only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an "objective correlative"; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that *particular* emotion, so that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked.' Now Hamlet's emotion exceeds the facts provoking it; his mother does not deserve to upset him to the degree in which he is in fact upset: whence the confused fog which extends both over Shakespeare's eyes and over his character's actions.

This complete transposition in the domain of vision and this strict correspondence of expression to the expressed are found in *The Divine Comedy*. It is pure nonsense to filter Dante's lyricism and to reject, as certain critics do, the doctrinal framework of the poem. Eliot deems that the 'philosophy' is essential to the structure and the structure to the beauty of the parts of the *Commedia*. He remarks very finely that the true philosopher-poet does not belong to the family of Empedocles, who conceives a system in verse, but to that of Lucre-

tius who finds the concrete poetic equivalent (otherwise, the 'objective correlative') of a doctrine already conceived before him. This is essentially the case of Dante, who comes on the scene at the moment when Catholic Christian doctrine has become a set of 'physical modifications' of the human universe. Eliot shows very forcibly how, in *The Divine Comedy,* the expression of emotions is closely bound up with the allegorical framework of the poem and how the structure of the emotions is rendered possible by this framework. Every emotion is dependent on the whole. 'The emotion of the person is always preserved entire, but is modified by the position assigned to the person in the eternal scheme, is coloured by the atmosphere of that person's residence in one of the three worlds. . . .' We admire or should admire in the *Commedia* the most comprehensive and the most *ordered* presentation of emotions ever made. It will perhaps be understood that for my part I approve this judgment unreservedly.

The case of Blake provides the counter-test to that of Dante. Here is a poet richly endowed, penetrating, musical, hallucinated. For want of a frame of naturalized traditional ideas in his mind,

he became bogged in a personal philosophy, whence confusion and dispersion, for the philosophic work must be carried out in advance if the writer is to attain to a maximum of poetic concentration. 'Confusion of thought, emotion, and vision, is what we find in a work such as *Also Sprach Zarathustra;* it is eminently not a Latin virtue.'

A remark well worthy of consideration, and which makes one wonder. Here are seen Eliot's courage and lofty precision, and at the same time the dangerous point of his doctrine. Critical judgment implies an effort at definition and objective distribution [7] which helps us to overcome and correct the indefinable state of pleasure. Good. But where we are no longer guided by an immediate and imperious pleasure (I mean the pleasure of a cultivated judge laying claims to competence), we risk being guided uniquely by an ideal representation; we risk substituting this representation for aesthetic reality: whence a fresh confusion, at least as grave as the other, for we shall incline to rate a mediocre

[7] Eliot's objectivism and positivism should not be confused, as they have been, with the scientism of men like Taine and Rémy de Gourmont strongly stained either by sentimentalism or by sensualism. Eliot is concerned with a technique of the intelligence sufficiently interested in a given object to be disinterested of self.

work presenting the characters which we have defined, above an eminent work from which these characters are absent. We shall deny doing so, I willingly admit, but then we shall have a bad conscience so long as we shall not have admitted that art is relative to time, place, the degree of clearness of ideas, and that a confused masterpiece represents precisely a revealing effort to get out of the confusion. *Zarathustra* is a striking work in this respect, and still more striking is Bergson's philosophy, which far from increasing the cloudiness has won over certain romantic phantoms the most decisive and the most fecund of victories. In Bergson's finest pages (in his *Introduction to Metaphysics,* for example) will be found 'thoughts magnificently formed'; nothing prevents one from seeing in them the introduction to a classicism more supple and more faithful to the contours of life; and the pages on movement, in which indeed breaks out this 'rapid analysis of the sensation to the point of principle and definition' which Eliot admires in Aristotle, enrich the intelligence singularly more than the criticism of them given by Mr. Benda. The example of Claudel shows, on the other hand, that at the beginning of this century to come upon

the true figure of a tradition, one had to furnish an intellectual effort at least as personal as that without defined direction of a man like Blake. In short, there are periods of accomplishment and periods of preparation and birth. The first find or meet again the perfect accords of the mind; the second reveal its profound tendencies and give the scale which enables the first to find these accords. The critic's most urgent duty is not to confuse the periods; his most delicate duty is to establish between them relations, not of inequality, but of proportionality.

I admit at the same time that I am fighting against my preferences, which spontaneously would be given entirely to Eliot's definitions. I believe that the pages in which he establishes a radical distinction between personal values and aesthetic values cannot be too much emphasized. The mind of the poet has only a catalytic influence on the emotions and the feelings which, in being combined, form an entirely original synthesis, in no way analogous to the author's personality.[8] For what counts is not the 'greatness,' the intensity of the emotions, the

[8] I add that, in my opinion, this pure aesthetic work should be duplicated in some way by a philosophic work in which the notion of personality will play a more and more important rôle.

elements, but the intensity of the artistic process, the pressure, as it were, under which the fusion takes place.[9] It follows that the parts of a work should not be related to such or such feeling of the author's, but to the totality of the work, and the work itself to the totality of works of its order.

Eliot's ideas make him akin to Gordon Craig as to the conception of drama, to Paul Valéry and the *surréalistes* as to the theory of poetic creation. But he is to be distinguished from the former in that his drama is an operation of the poet, not a construction by the stage-manager; from the latter by his anxiety to transpose the integral experience of man, and by his conception of the hierarchy which brings him to instaurate what others suppress or forget. It is a pleasure, even when one does not share his ideas, to follow the work of this mind who rests only when he has drawn the clear lines of an impeccable definition (as when he compares the work of Ben Jonson to the non-Euclidian geometries), who hesitates, turns back, struggles without respite until he has produced a coherent thought, and what is better, a positive thought.

[9] This pressure, and the concentration resulting, are very easily felt in *The Waste Land*, Eliot's latest poem, a very remarkable poem which I might reproach perhaps with having too great an autonomy of the aesthetic synthesis.